

A STUDY  
OF  
ENGLISH RHYME

BY  
CHARLES F. RICHARDSON

*Professor of English in Dartmouth College*

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## PREFACE

THIS book is the best and the worst on its theme, for there is no other.

Many volumes have been written on the principles and practice of the poetic art; but none, from Sidney's days to Saintsbury's, has been wholly devoted to the nature and history of English rhyme. The rhyming dictionaries, such as Walker's, Barnum's, or Loring's, have naturally contented themselves with vocabularies; while general treatises on poetics or poetic history have usually dismissed rhyme as a modern phonetic pleasure of uncertain origin. Furthermore, most writers on the subject, save Schipper and his followers, have ignored the relation, which ought to be obvious, between alliteration, assonance, and end-rhyme, as different forms of the same thing.

The purpose of the present work is to try to trace the evolution of English rhyme, and to correlate it with physical laws, the growth of individual or communal song, and the history of the rhyme-art in other European tongues. Collateral attention has therefore been given to alliteration in the Teutonic languages, assonance in Spanish, and end-rhyme in Latin, Provençal, Italian, French, and German; but it was manifestly impossible, in a volume of small size, to present a polyglot or comparative history of a subject of such indefinite extent. Indeed, a full record of English rhyme alone would demand, for its presentation, a library almost as extensive as the works of the poets discussed. It has therefore been my attempt to give the leading principles of the discussion, leaving applications to be followed at the reader's pleasure.

Obligation is acknowledged, in greater or less degree, to the volumes cited in the foot-notes. Hundreds of others have been examined — pamphlets and treatises of such varying value that a bibliography would mislead rather than aid the student. A word of special gratitude belongs to Professor G. Gregory Smith, whose *Elizabethan Literary Criticism* has relieved students from the search for rare originals or sometimes untrustworthy reprints. In general, however, I have relied upon first-hand reading of the poetry itself. For assistance outside my immediate field I am indebted to Louis Bell, Ph.D., of Boston; Professor Duncan C. Macdonald of Hartford Theological Seminary; Lucius Waterman, D.D., Rector of St. Thomas' Church, Hanover; my colleagues, C. N. Gould, P. O. Skinner, E. F. Langley, and A. K. Hardy, of the faculty of Dartmouth College; and Elizabeth Richardson.

The use of the colon between rhyming sounds explains itself. The ordinary *ab* scheme of indicating rhyming lines is of course followed. In a few cases the phonetic symbols of the *New English Dictionary* have been used, but only in circumstances admitting little doubt. Even contemporary speech is an uncertain or variable thing; poets in every age have shown a large margin of freedom in their rhyme-sounds; while the application of speech-symbols to the language spoken by the dead is largely guesswork. "Every writer on English verse," said *The Quarterly Review* some time since, "has his own metrical symbols, and no one appears to pay any attention to any other theorist, except in occasional intervals for depreciation." This remark applies, in good measure, to the phoneticians.

In view of the broad definition of rhyme (see page 22) which states the underlying purpose of the book, I have not confined myself to externals; still less to end-rhyme alone. The student of rhyme must always consider its ultimate result in the mind as well as its immediate effect upon the ear. Again, the book is mainly a study and record, not a lawgiver. If the history of

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English rhyme teaches anything, it is that taste is the final arbiter in the matter of the pleasurableness of similar sounds.

I am of course aware of the etymological reasons for the spelling "rime," employed by eminent authorities of the present day; as a matter of fact, however, good use has thus far refused to give up the illogical "rhyme," which is therefore retained in these pages. Language, after all, is a fact, not an opinion.

CHARLES F. RICHARDSON.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE,  
June 25, 1909.



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# A STUDY OF ENGLISH RHYME

## I

### THE POETRY OF EARTH

RHYME is an identity or close similarity between stressed sounds in corresponding places.

Thus defined, rhyme has analogies in all the realm of nature. Matter is a condition of force; force is motion; motion is measured by waves; and wave-motion, whether of heat, light, sound, or electricity, is, like music or verse, a series of phases of stress and interval. In a strictly physical sense, "the poetry of earth is never dead."

Emerson spoke not more as poet than as observer when he said:

"Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,  
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,  
But it carves the bow of beauty there,  
And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake."

The whole universe swings to rhythm, and through the ages men have fancied themselves hearing some notes of the cosmic harmony. The Psalmist, meditating on the heavenly bodies by night, perceived their "march of soundless music in the vision of the seer," and exclaimed:

"The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament showeth his handy-work.  
Day unto day uttereth speech,  
And night unto night showeth knowledge.  
No speech nor language,  
Their voice is not heard."

More confident was the lumberman in the woods of northern Maine, who, when told of the music of the spheres, declared that



he had often heard it, when lying awake on winter nights. It was, he said, "just like a kind of little fine whizz."

There is more than an elaborate metaphor in the famous introduction to Dryden's shorter *Song for Saint Cecilia's Day*. It is a fair summary of nineteenth-century views of evolution and the correlation and conservation of forces:

"From Harmony, from heavenly Harmony  
This universal frame began:  
When Nature underneath a heap  
Of jarring atoms lay  
And could not heave her head,  
The tuneful voice was heard from high,  
Arise, ye more than dead!  
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry  
In order to their stations leap,  
And Music's power obey.  
From Harmony, from heavenly Harmony  
This universal frame began:  
From Harmony to Harmony  
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,  
The diapason closing full in Man."<sup>1</sup>

When Galileo and Bruno perceived that the solid earth itself was but keeping time in an orderly whirl of suns and stars, they were not far from the idea of Addison, who heard them singing as they shine. And thus Shakespeare made Lorenzo say to Jessica:

"Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold.  
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins."

A hundred years before the time of Dryden George Puttenham, in his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), reminded his readers that

<sup>1</sup> "Does not the Earth really live a universal life? Are not all its parts, the liquid interior and the firm crust, the ocean and the atmosphere, comprehended into a grand whole whose parts interact in manifold ways and yet in harmony? Ebb and flow, day and night, summer and winter, are they not life-rhythms, similar to those which the individual life experiences; or, rather, do not animals and plants, with their little rhythmical vital processes, take part in the great life of the Earth? Is not the life of the Earth mirrored in their sleep and waking, their bloom and withering, their origin and decay?" — Paulsen: *Introduction to Philosophy*, 207.



doctors of theology said that God made the world by number, measure, and weight; and that philosophers set forth a triple proportion, — the arithmetical, the geometrical, and the musical. Thomas Campion, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, packed this truth into a few words: "The world is made by symmetry and proportion, and is in that respect compared to music, and music to poetry."

Thus, in studying the unity of the arts, we find one general law of harmonious satisfying proportion, so that we speak of a poetical picture; of tone-color; or find painting, song, orchestration, and the drama combining in a Wagnerian opera. Perhaps the symphony is, as yet, man's highest contribution to pure art; but there are other symphonies than those of the orchestra. Every simplest consonance of sound is an illustration of the pleasure humanity has always taken in that musical unity which binds agreeable diversities. It is no wonder, then, that man, standing in a universe of harmonious contrasts,

"Through worlds, and races, and terms, and times,  
Saw musical order and pairing rhymes."

When one hears the whisper of the breeze, the roar of the sea, the ripple of the brook, the trill of the bird, pleasure stirs him to imitation. The fable of Pan's flute was but the anticipation of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony or Whitman's *Proud Music of the Sea-Storm*.<sup>1</sup> Thoreau once assured us that he heard finer music in the tinkle of his hoe on the pebbles, as he worked in his garden on the shore of Walden Pond, than in any symphony concert. To his simple mind the telegraph-wire was a "redeemer," which always brought him a message from the highest: "As I went under the new telegraph wire, I heard it vibrating like a harp high overhead; it was as the sound of a far-off glorious life; a supernal life which came down to us and vibrated the lattice work of this life of ours — an Æolian harp. It reminded me, I say, with a certain pathetic moderation, of what finer and deeper stirrings I was susceptible, which grandly set all argument and dispute aside, a triumphant though transient exhibition of the

<sup>1</sup> The original and better title.

truth." Himself a flute-player, he would have been interested in the statement of a distinguished American organist who once declared the ultimate sound of Niagara, or the roar of a wind-swept forest, or the multitudinous din of a great city, to be in the key of A, octaves below the bass. Even this rather surprising dictum is not hastily to be dismissed; for many a musical ear, on experiment, will determine that these sounds are at least nearer A than C or E.

As regards language, with which poetry is chiefly concerned, Claude Fauchet, at the close of the sixteenth century, said in his still serviceable treatise on the *Origines de la Langue et Poesie Françoise, Ryme, et Romans* (1581): "Car cela estant uniuersel en la nature, que tout mouuement se fait auec temps, le son & les paroles estans mouuements, ainsi qu'il appert par leur origine (qui n'est autre chose qu'un air batant l'artere par laquelle il passe, & qui depuis est moderé par le palais, la langue & les dents), il est necessaire que ce mouuement de paroles se face auec le temps." And again: "Puis donc (dit Aristote) que le temps est le nombre du mouuement; le rythme (s'il est la mesme chose que le temps) sera le mouuement du nombre."

The historian Mitford, in his *Inquiry into the Principles of Harmony in Language* (2d ed., 1804), had similarly striven to explain the movement of verse by reference to the laws of music. Melody, said he, is a pleasing succession of varying tones exhibited in the flow of speech. There was nothing new, therefore, in Sidney Lanier's detailed attempt to find the basis of verse in the laws of sound, and to measure rhythm by musical notation. Modern methods go still farther, in making poetry visible as well as audible; for Professor Scripture's phonograph cylinders, described in his *Experimental Phonetics*, show similar curves for similar — that is, symmetrically rhythmical, or rhyming — sounds. Here, of course, are no words or syllables — in themselves mere phonetic devices — but wave-lines corresponding to vocal or other sounds.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the poet's dream of harmony becomes a fact in the labora-

<sup>1</sup> "With the aid of new and more sensitive methods of making gramophone and zonophone disks, we may hope to catch verse as it flows from the mouth of the unsuspecting poet, and thus to obtain and study some-

tory, where, not less than in the field or wood, there is exact truth in Keats' statement, that "the poetry of earth is never dead."

thing far closer to the real poem than the cold and inadequate skeleton of it that appears on the printed page." — *E. W. Scripture*, in *The Century Magazine*, February, 1902.

## II

### THE RYTHMICAL CREATION OF BEAUTY

WHAT is the relation between the poetry of earth and the poetry of man?

Whatever we may dismiss as fanciful or unproved, this at least is certain: Nothing moves without vibrations; were the eye and the ear not reached by waves of light and sound, nature and art, as far as man is concerned, would almost disappear. Pulsation, impulse — the very etymology of the words tells the universal fact that communication from man to man is ever related to the rapidity, force, regularity, or variability of vibrations. The more rhythmical they become, the more intense the feeling aroused.

Reversing the statement, the deepest feeling instinctively adopts the rhythmical form: the wail of the animal, the lamentation over the corpse, the battle-cry, the love-song, the "Laus Deo" of noble triumph. The spontaneous singer may burst into recitative, parallelism, alliteration, assonance, end-rhyme, or what not; but he is sure to be rhythmical, and to stir his hearers in proportion to the strength and skill of his wave-like swing from thought to thought and stress to stress.

"Observe," says Carlyle, "how all passionate language does of itself become musical, — with a finer music than the mere accent; the speech of a man even in zealous anger becomes a chant, a song. All deep things are Song. It seems somehow the very central essence of us, Song; as if all the rest were but wrappages and hulls! The primal element of us; of us, and of all things. The Greeks fabled of Sphere-Harmonies: it was the feeling they had of the inner structure of Nature; that the soul of all her voices and utterances was perfect music. . . . See deep enough,

and you see musically; the heart of Nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it.”<sup>1</sup>

Poe’s definition of poetry as “the rhythmical creation of beauty” has never been bettered. Strictly considered, it includes song and symphony, — vocal and instrumental music of every kind. In the broad sense, music is poetry and poetry music. If we say that verse is the rhythmical creation of beauty in language, the statement is sufficiently accurate for all purposes of criticism.

Whence comes the universal desire to create the beautiful?

Many are the theories of the origin of art — that is, of created beauty — in the world. Plant- and animal-decoration, for allurement or defence, accounts for the subconscious development of many lovely things, from the petal of a flower to the tail of a peacock. Phyllotaxy and flower-adornment, in the botanical world, are both serviceable and symmetrical; and in the animal kingdom many creatures survive simply because they appeal, by attractiveness at pairing-time, to an unquestionable sense of beauty in their kind. From the beautiful in substance to the beautiful in act is but a step; hence the gallop, the play of the body, the spectacular flight, the bird-song. Animals and children gesture, intone, sing; and here the element of feeling, indispensable in the lyric, is added to the satisfaction inherent in proportion.

Puttenham declared that “all arts grew first by observation of nature’s proceedings and custom.” Many other theorists have connected the beginnings of song with direct imitations of bird-music, reproduced by the human voice, or by a primitive flute, like Siegfried’s.<sup>2</sup>

But the more natural explanation is to be found in the instinc-

<sup>1</sup> *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, 78.

<sup>2</sup> So Lucretius (I, 5, 1378):

“At liquidas avium voces imitauer ore  
Ante fuit multo quam laevia carmina cantu  
Concelebrare homines possent, aureisque jurare.”

and compare the onomatopoetic imitations in the *Birds* and *Frogs* of Aristophanes. The “Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo,” of Nash’s *Spring* is known to everybody from its place on the first page of Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*.



tive development of the human voice itself, as truly a musical instrument as the skylark's. In that development, of course, onomatopoeia and the "bow-wow theory" explain many things. The poetry of language would be a different thing without the melodious *l*, the explosive *p*, the dull *d*, the hissing *s*, and so on. There was an entire sentence of woe in the Anglo-Saxon "walawa." Lord Bacon understood all this very well when he said, in his *Natural History*: "There is found a similitude between the sound that is made by inanimate bodies, or by animate bodies that have no voice articulate, and divers letters of articulate voices; and commonly men have given such names to those sounds as do allude unto the articulate letters; as trembling of hot water hath resemblance unto the letter *l*; quenching of hot metals with the letter *z*; snarling of dogs with the letter *r*; the noise of screech-owls with the letters *sh*; voice of cats with the diphthong *eu*; voice of cuckoos with the diphthong *ou*; sounds of strings with the diphthong *ng*." Long before Bacon, Ovid had been reminded by *m* of the lowing of the ox.

Birds and most savages use a very primitive melody, chiefly relying, for effect, upon iteration. Some Indian-songs — and Indian prayers are always lyrical — consist of only three words, which are sung over and over again. At first, the human song, like that of the bird, shows little emotional variation; stress of intonation and emphatic gesture come later, in the savage as in the child. When Darwin suggested that singing preceded speech and was the author of it, he simply sent us back to the baby's cry and coo, and to the interjection, which is language before it is disintegrated into words.

While the play-instinct in childhood does not account for the origins of art, it does make plain the universality of the art-instinct, and its early appearance in the individual life. Aristotle perceived that the two chief causes of poetry were our implanted instincts of imitation and of harmonious rhythm, by which rude improvisations gave birth to true song. The child, as every one knows by his own experience, is a primitive singer, player upon musical instruments, orator, dramatist, painter, architect, soldier, and military and naval engineer. In his various

doings, he instinctively makes more or less orderly repetitions of tone and action. These repetitions, while they last, exemplify Poe's dictum that unity and brevity are lyrical essentials. Of the truth of all this, Wordsworth's famous lines in the *Ode on Immortality* are a convenient summary, showing, as they do, the similarity between the child and the uncivilized adult :

"As if his whole vocation  
Were endless imitation."

But the chief origin of art is man's desire to perpetuate the fleeting. That face will disappear in death; I must carve or paint it while yet there is time. My abode is a poor perishing thing; let me replace it by wall and arch. That song my fathers sang; I will transmit it, in memory or manuscript, to my children's children. My glorious reign will pass from the minds of men; bards and scribes shall rescue its renown from the fugitive years. Of all these things, *littera scripta manet*; and song, at once agreeable and rememberable because of its rhythm, has best defied the flight of the centuries.

The basis of song is a yearning to transmit feeling by utterances at once rhythmical and cumulative. In man, and in many of the higher animals, exists an intense wish to express pleasure or pain, especially in states of exaltation. The howl of the dog, the purr of the cat, the mating-song of the bird, the triumphant crow of the cock, the cheer of the warrior, the concerted grunt of the laborer, the funeral croon, are all expressions of heightened or deepened feeling, and most of them are more or less modulated. Folk-singing, however rude, is always rhythmical; and regularity increases with the development of civilization. Rhythm, the basis of motion in the physical world, is the foundation of primitive verse, whether applied to war, worship, love, or labor. To the recurrent sounds of the voice are added simultaneous recurrent motions of the body, and the emotional chant, individual or communal, is brought into being, — a chant that in its essentials contains the germs of the dance, the drama, the opera, and the balanced oration. Probably there never was a time, after the first steps in evolution had been taken, when the lowest man — some say the woman, as having an earlier intellectual develop-

ment and a stronger emotional nature, perhaps crooning her baby to sleep — did not turn naturally to rhythm in some form, afterwards adding the beat of vocal or instrumental sound, or both together, to concurrent and emphatic movements of the body. Thus music became the universal language, as marching or dancing was almost the earliest of the arts.

“Every one,” says Hazlitt, “who declaims warmly, or grows intent upon a subject, rises into a sort of blank verse or measured prose.” Doctor Johnson once summed the subject in a few sonorous words: “The perception of harmony is, indeed, conferred upon men in degrees very unequal; but there are none who do not perceive it, or to whom a regular series of proportionate sounds cannot give delight.”<sup>1</sup>

The deaf, dumb, and blind Laura Bridgman got some sense of pleasure in the construction of what seemed to her regularly recurrent harmonies constituting little poems or hymns; and the abler and more highly educated Helen Keller — profiting by half a century of development in the education of the deaf and blind — apprehended the finer rhythms of nature, and uttered her feelings in language that possesses not only the spirit but something of the form of poetry:

“The noiseless little noises of earth  
Come with softest rustle;  
The shy, sweet feet of life;  
The silky flutter of moth-wings  
Against my restraining palm;  
The strident beat of insect-wings,  
The silvery trickle of water;  
Little breezes busy in the summer grass;  
The music of crisp, whisking, scurrying leaves,  
The swirling, wind-swept, frost-tinted leaves;  
The crystal splash of summer rain,  
Saturate with the odors of the sod. . . .

“My hands evoke sight and sound out of feeling,  
Intershifting the senses endlessly,  
Linking motion with sight, odor with sound.  
They give color to the honeyed breeze,  
The measure and passion of a symphony  
To the beat and quiver of unseen wings.

<sup>1</sup> The Rambler, No. 8.



In the secrets of earth and sun and air  
 My fingers are wise;  
 They snatch light out of darkness,  
 They thrill to harmonies breathed in silence.”<sup>1</sup>

The pleurably arranged sound of music or verse exists in some degree, of course, in rhythmical or balanced prose, or in any utterance where idea is put over against idea, or word against word. Thought-rhyme or thought-rhythm is the setting of an expression over against its amplification, its duplicate, or its opposite, the two being bound together in such a way as to preserve variety in unity. An ancient illustration of this regularly recurring balance of thought is found in the parallelisms of the Hebrew Psalms and prophetic books.

Of rhyme, in the modern sense, Hebrew literature had none, though the acrostic abecedarian arrangement of such compositions as Psalm cxix is a sort of alliteration.<sup>2</sup> But in the poeti-

<sup>1</sup> *The Century*, May, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> For the following data with reference to alliteration and acrostics in Hebrew I am indebted to Lucius Waterman, D. D., rector of St. Thomas' Church, Hanover, N. H.:

Alliteration is fairly common in Hebrew of all periods. Examples may be found in Gen. i, 2; xviii, 27; Job xxx, 19; xlii, 6; Is. xiv, 22; xxii, 5; xxiv, 4; Ps. xviii, 8; Micah i, 10. The *Jewish Encyclopaedia* says under "Alliteration" that rhyme (except of inflectional endings) in Hebrew is always connected with assonance of the whole word.

Eight of the one hundred and fifty psalms (if one takes Psalms ix and x as one piece of work) are marked by acrostical writing. These are ix and x, xxv, xxxiv, xxxvii, cxi, cxii, cxix, cxlv.

The scheme of Psalm ix is

Verses 1, 2, four strophes, each beginning with Aleph [A. V. spelling of the letters].

Verses 3, 4, four strophes, the first beginning with Beth.

Verse 5, two strophes, the first beginning with Gimel.

(Daleth, the fourth letter, is wanting.)

Verse 6, two strophes, the first beginning with He.

Verses 7, 8, 9, 10, eight strophes, each verse beginning with Vau.

Verses 11, 12, four strophes, the first beginning with Zain.

Verses 13, 14, five strophes, the first beginning with Cheth.

Verses 15, 16, five strophes, the first beginning with Teth.

Verse 17, two strophes, the first beginning with Jod.

Verse 18, two strophes, the first beginning with Caph.

Two verses more seem to be outside the scheme.

Psalm x begins verse 1 with the next letter, Lamed, then skips the next six letters, but has just such a number of strophes as would well provide for six; then come

cal books or parts of books, such as the Psalms, Job, Isaiah, Joel, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Proverbs, etc., the second line or half-line is usually set over against the first, as its proper balance. Thus Hebrew poetry combines a rhythmical swing with the freedom of prose. This characteristic, which was so marked that it remains in most translations, appears at once in what has been called the oldest poem in the world: the Lament of Lamech (Genesis iv, 23, 24):

“And Lamech said unto his wives:  
 ‘Adah and Zillah: hear my voice,  
 Ye wives of Lamech: hearken unto my speech;  
 For I have slain a man to my wounding: and a young man to my hurt.  
 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold: truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.”

More elaborate illustrations of this regular proportional form of  $a : b :: c : d$  may be found all through the Psalms, as, for instance, in Psalm ciii, beginning:

Verses 12, 13, four strophes, the first beginning with Koph.

Verse 14, four strophes, the first beginning with Resh.

Verses 15, 16, four strophes, the first beginning with Schin.

Verses 17, 18, four strophes, the first beginning with Tau.

Some declare confidently that our present passage, verses 2–11 inclusive, is a piece of another ancient poem, substituted for the original of the acrostic writer.

In Psalms xxv and xxxiv there are 22 verses each, but in each case only 21 verses are acrostical, the sixth letter, Vau, being omitted, and the 22d verse beginning with a form of the Hebrew word “deliver.”

The scheme of Psalm xxxvii is similar to that of Psalms ix–x (combined), but brings in the entire alphabet, in order.

Psalms cxi and cxii have the same scheme: 22 strophes, eight verses of two each being followed by two verses of three each. Each strophe begins with its own letter of the alphabet.

Psalm cxix has 22 sections, one for each letter of the alphabet. Each section has eight verses of two strophes each, and every verse begins with the letter of its section.

Psalm cxlv has 21 verses, beginning with the letters of the alphabet in order, with the exception of Nun.

Proverbs xxxi, 10–31 is an acrostic, the verses beginning with the 22 letters in order.

Lamentations i, ii, iii, and iv are acrostics. Chapters ii, iii, and iv exchange the places of the sixteenth and seventeenth letters, Ain and Pe. Chapter iii has 66 verses, beginning three verses in succession with one letter through 22 triplets.

Curious traces of an ancient acrostic, which has suffered much from editors, are said by some recent scholars to be found in Nahum i, 3 and following verses.

"The Lord is full of compassion and mercy: long suffering, and of great goodness.

He will not always chide; neither keepeth he his anger forever.

He has not dealt with us after our sins: nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.

For as the heaven is high above the earth: so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

Sometimes the first half of a statement is elaborated, but not the second, as in Psalm xc, 2:

"Before the mountains were brought forth,  
Or ever thou hadst framed the earth and the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

Again, the duplication is in the second half, as in verse 4 of the same Psalm:

"For a thousand years in thy sight  
Are but as yesterday when it is past,  
And as a watch in the night."

Of this poetical element in Hebrew some of the earlier English writers had an inkling. Said Thomas Lodge, in his *Defence of Poetry* (1579): "Ask Josephus, and he will tell you that Isaiah, Job, and Solomon vouchsafed poetical practices, for (if Origen and he fault not) their verse was hexameter and pentameter. Inquire of Cassiodorus, he will say that all the beginning of poetry proceeded from the Scripture." Similarly Puttenham: "King David also and Solomon his son and many other of the holy prophets wrote in metres, and used to sing them to the harp, although to many of us, ignorant of the Hebrew language and phrase, and not observing it, the same seem but a prose." Sir John Harrington, in 1591, followed with the remark: "Some part of the Scripture was written in verse, as the Psalms of David, and certain other songs of Deborah, of Solomon, and others, which the learnedest divines do affirm to be verse and find that they are in metre, though the rule of the Hebrew verse they agree not on." And since nearly all writers on verse, for four hundred years, have dutifully followed their predecessors (when not calling them too stupid for endurance) it was easy for William

Vaughan, in his *Golden Grove* (1600), to label Moses and Deborah "the most ancient poets."<sup>1</sup>

The thought of the Psalms and of King David naturally suggests the antiquity of the dance, and its connection with lyrical and instrumental music.<sup>2</sup> Some one has said that when Adam and Eve leaped their first leap of joy and shouted their first shout of joy they gave the start to the dance and the duet. At any rate, in the dawn of history "the Apollinean instinct of solitary song and the Dionysian impulse of ecstatic communal emotion" were often accompanied by rhythmical motions of the body. At the close of a newly-discovered fragment (of the fourth century B. C.) of Timotheus' *Οι Πέρσαι* we read: "But the Greeks set up a trophy, most holy shrine of Zeus, and aloud they shout the song of victory to Apollo, their protecting god, and in harmony with the rhythm beat the earth with measured tread." "The beat," says the latest work on musical notation,<sup>3</sup> "is derived from the pulse, and is shown by raising and lowering the hand, — *levatio*, up-beat; *positio*, down-beat; or in Greek, *arsis* and *thesis*. Time was indicated by the raising and lowering of the foot by the Greeks, hence the word foot for a poetical measure." That is, the foot is the unit of time in verse, as the measure is in music. Later, in the delivery of the Greek ode, to the accompaniment of music and dancing, the singers moved to one side during the

<sup>1</sup> A clean definition is that given in Chaytor's *Companion to French Verse*: "Poetry in its formal aspect may be defined, in order to distinguish it from prose, as language in strictly recurrent rhythmical form. . . . By the use of rhythm we mean the introduction into language of a principle of proportion in the arrangement of words. . . . When . . . the recurrence of a voice-modulation can be anticipated with certainty by the hearer, rhythm becomes metre, and such rhythmical language becomes verse or poetry (in form). Hence metre may be defined as regularly recurrent rhythm." According to this, the English version of the Psalms, or Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, would not be formal poetry, and would come under the head of rhythm, not metre.

<sup>2</sup> "Dancing, the most real of the arts (Wagner), seeing that the whole man is concerned in it, from head to foot, with motions and gestures that give it tone, and rhythm that gives it speech, was also the primitive and universal art, the sign of social consent: consenting steps, with mimicry of whatever sort, timed a series of rude cries which expressed the emotion of the moment, and so grew into articulate language." — F. B. Gummere: *The Beginnings of Poetry*, 328.

<sup>3</sup> *Notation*, by C. F. Abdy-Williams: London, 1905.



strophe, and to the other in the antistrophe, standing still in the concluding epode.

At the basis of the Hebrew parallelism, the Greek strophe, antistrophe, and chorus, and the Teutonic refrain is, of course, the inherent animal-idea — already mentioned — of strength accumulated by repetition.<sup>1</sup> This is notable in herdsmen's calls to animals; in parents' summons to children; in men's adjurations to work, fight, or win athletic triumphs; in funeral croons repeatedly dwelling on the virtues of the dead, etc. Such iteration goes from one word to a whole passage. Similarly, children demand absolute uniformity in the oral telling of their best-loved stories, and correct the narrator when he makes the slightest slip from the received version.

During the American civil war, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, then colonel of a regiment of colored troops, largely composed of former slaves, gathered at first hand thirty-six folk-songs, religious, aspirational, and other.<sup>2</sup> Most were of unknown or apparently remote authorship; one or two were of recent and known composition. Nearly all were influenced by scriptural thought or expression, but not to the destruction of racial characteristics or proper originality. As a rule, the songs abounded in the repetitions, refrains, contrasts, or parallelisms which are sure to characterize primitive verse. All were sung or chanted by groups, rather than by soloists, and often with a gusto amounting to frenzy. Instrumental accompaniments were exceptional.

A favorite device was to add to some general statement or exclamation the names of the individuals of the company, one by one: "Hold your light, brudder Robert," etc., or

"Oh, my mudder is gone! my mudder is gone!  
My mudder is gone into heaven, my Lord!"

followed by "my fader," "de angels," and so on.

"The dusky figures," says Colonel Higginson, "moved in the rhythmical barbaric dance the negroes call a shout, chanting,

<sup>1</sup> The refrain is "the main communal element in songs of labor; . . . its functions in communal play [are] primarily a combination of consenting cries and movements in the festal dance." — F. B. Gummere: *The Beginnings of Poetry*, 314.

<sup>2</sup> *The Atlantic Monthly*, 19: 685.

often harshly, but always in the most perfect time, some monotonous refrain." In one song, looking toward freedom, the inevitable "no more" burden bears a strong part: no more peck o' corn, no more pint o' salt, no more hundred lash, no more mistress' call. "My brudder, how long" is also a cry of universal humanity.

Some of these "negro spirituals," as Colonel Higginson calls them, have end-rhyme, with the usual ballad indifference to anything but rough assonances; but as a rule the balanced ideas, in refrains or elsewhere, furnish all the rhyme-art deemed necessary.

The gem of this important little ballad-collection is

"I KNOW MOON-RISE.

" I know moon-rise, I know star-rise,  
     Lay dis body down.  
 I walk in de moonlight, I walk in de starlight,  
     To lay dis body down.  
 I 'll walk in de graveyard, I 'll walk through de graveyard,  
     To lay dis body down.  
 I 'll lie in de grave and stretch out my arms;  
     Lay dis body down.  
 I go to de judgment in de evenin' of de day,  
     When I lay dis body down;  
 And my soul and your soul will meet in de day  
     When I lay dis body down."

In one instance Colonel Higginson was able to catch folk-poetry in the making. He had long wondered whether these songs "had a conscious and definite origin in some leading mind, or whether they grew by gradual accretion, in an almost unconscious way." At last, in response to questioning, an oarsman confessed: "I been a-raise a sing, myself, once. Once we boys went for tote some rice, and de nigger-driver, he keep a-callin' on us; and I say, 'Oh, de ole nigger-driver!' Den anudder said, 'Fust ting my mammy tole me was, notin' so bad as nigger-driver.' Den I made a sing, just puttin' a word, and den anudder word." Thus, one began the singing, and the men, after listening a moment, joined in the chorus as if it were an old acquaintance, though they evidently had never heard it before, — with the following result:

"Oh, de ole nigger-driver !  
     Oh, gwine away !  
 Fust ting my mammy tell me,  
     Oh, gwine away !  
 Tell me 'bout de nigger-driver,  
     Oh, gwine away !  
 Nigger-driver second devil,  
     Oh, gwine away !  
 Best ting for do he driver,  
     Oh, gwine away !  
 Knock he down and spoil he labor,  
     Oh, gwine away ! "

Here, in South Carolina in the 'sixties, was the communal chant, developed on lines probably followed a thousand times before, in far antiquity and in many sundered lands.<sup>1</sup>

As all early songs were meant to be heard, not read, any sort of repetition helped the singer's memory and the listener's attention.

"All the moods of verse," said Poe, "rhythm, metre, stanza, rhyme, alliteration, the refrain, and other analogous effects . . . are to be referred to the human enjoyment of equality, fitness." The universality of the refrain satisfied Poe of its intrinsic value, but he undertook to improve it by variation, on the ground that "duplicate sameness or monotony" would have been rejected even in the origins of rhyme — which it certainly was not. Of the beautifully variant effects of Poe's "repetend" there can be no question; but the primitive ear, like the child's, better enjoyed the unaltered "over-and-over-again" effect, — as even to-day we enjoy the refrains of *Fine Flowers in the Valley*, *A Lyke-Wake Dirge*, Tennyson's *The Sisters*, or Longfellow's *My Lost Youth*. The effect of cumulative contrast is sometimes best attained, as in the last-named poem, by a final utterance in prose. The purpose of the refrain is to furnish a contrast or a climax, or both. In such poems as Mrs. Browning's *The Rhyme of the Duchess May* the former is desired; in Poe's *Raven* both are kept in mind.

Thus, in all lands and times, the rhythmical creation of beauty has proceeded, by variant means, to the arrangement of words in

<sup>1</sup> "Negro music is spontaneous. In Africa it sprang into life at the war-dance, at funerals, and at marriage festivals. According to African students at Tuskegee, there are in the native melodies strains that reveal the close relationship between the negro music of Africa and America." — *Booker T. Washington*.

such measured order as shall give utterance to passion and at the same time give pleasure to the ear. It must be sufficiently like ordinary prose to be easily understood, and yet obviously removed from common speech. In a way, rhythm is added to speech, in a way it is inherent in it. There is no need to hunt backward, from Teuton to Roman, or Roman to Greek, or Greek to Arabian and Egyptian, for the origins of an instinct which is universal, and is certain to appear indigenously. Tacitus says that the Germans went to war chanting the deeds of their ancestors, put into verse. The Anglo-Saxons rushed into battle, singing while they smote with the sword on the shield. The sad processions of Russian exiles on their way to Siberia have timed their monotonous songs to the clanking of their chains.

In all these different but similar creations, the ear is the law-giver. Bede, our first English writer on versification, saw that the difference between metre and rhythm is that the latter is a free chant, not subject to any strict law.<sup>1</sup> Before him, St. Augustine had said that all metre is rhythm, but all rhythm not metre. Rhythm is merely a somewhat regular arrangement of time-intervals. In it, as in verse, the syllable is by no means the metrical unit.

Balanced prose, the oratorical swing, the strong iteration, the effective contrast, have always been recognized by all writers on oratory, from Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian down; and all have argued that they must never become regular verse. Thus there may be rhythmical prose, but never metrical prose. But the best Greek and Roman rhetoricians all understood and emphasized the fact that "the harmony of language, even of prose, belongs to the science of music."

It is no wonder that writers as late as William Webbe (1586) believed in the old fable that Orpheus "by the sweet gift of his heavenly poetry withdrew men from ranging uncertainly and wandering brutishly about"; or that he reverently cited Plato in support of the theory that the first singers were called *Vates* because "inspired with some divine instinct from heaven," while the rest, "which sang of love matters, or other lighter devices alluring unto pleasure or delight, were called *Poetae* or makers. Thus it appeareth both eloquence and poetry to have their be-

<sup>1</sup> See page 46.



ginning and original from these exercises, being framed in such sweet measure of sentences and pleasant harmony called ‘*Πυθμός*, which is an apt composition of words or clauses, drawing as it were by force the hearer’s ears even whithersoever it listeth, that Plato affirmeth therein to be contained *γυντεία*, an enchantment, as it were to persuade them anything whether they would or no.”<sup>1</sup>

It is a far cry from Plato to de Banville; but they agreed in making the Over-Soul the real poet, the earthly singer being but the mouthpiece. Said Plato: “Had he [the poet] learned by rules of art, he would have known how to speak, not of one theme only, but of all; and, therefore, God takes away the mind of poets, and uses them as His ministers, as He also uses diviners and holy prophets, in order that we who hear them may know that they speak not of themselves, who utter these priceless words in a state of unconsciousness, but that God is the speaker, and that through them He is conversing with us.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly de Banville, who declares that rhyme is the quality that constitutes the poet; his is “*ce mot sorcier, ce mot fee, ce mot magique*”: — “Si vous êtes poète, vous commencerez par voir distinctement dans la chambre noir de votre cerveau tout ce que vous voulez montrer à votre auditeur, et *en même temps* que les visions, se présenteront *spontanément* à votre esprit les mots qui, placés à la fin des vers, auront le don d’évoquer ces mêmes visions pour vos auditeurs. Le reste ne sera plus qu’un travail de goût et de coordination, un travail d’art qui s’apprend par l’étude des maîtres et par la fréquentation assidue de les oeuvres. Si au contraire vous n’êtes pas poète, vous n’aurez que des visions confuses, que nul peintre ne pourrait, d’après votre récit, traduire d’une manière claire et intelligible; et les mots qui pourront susciter ces mêmes visions dans l’esprit de votre auditeur ne vous viendront pas à la pensée. Car ce n’est ni le bon sens, ni la logique, ni l’érudition, ni la mémoire, qui fournissent ces mots armés d’un si étrange pouvoir; ils ne se présentent à la pensée qu’en vertu d’un *don* special, qui ne s’acquiert pas.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Discourse of English Poetry*; reprinted in *Elizabethan Literary Criticism*, ed. by G. Gregory Smith, I, 231.

<sup>2</sup> *Dialogues: Ion* (translated by Jowett).

<sup>3</sup> *Petit Traité de Poésie Française*, 50.

In the rhythmical creation of beauty, the unity of the arts must never be forgotten. But that unity does not mean that they are equivalent or interchangeable. Instrumental music is not vocal music, nor is sung poetry exactly equivalent to recited poetry. George Saintsbury concludes that "one has, while admitting the great stimulating force of music, to hint or re-hint a doubt whether, by itself, it can do much for prosody save suggest." But such suggestion may be very strong: Stephen C. Foster, the most original American composer, wrote the words and music of his songs simultaneously, fitting the one to the other as he went along. The French critic Camille Maclair finds in Schumann the union of song and syllabic sonority.

Many later critics agree with Sir Philip Sidney in his explicit characterization of music as "the most divine striker of the senses." Poe, certainly most competent to speak, declared verse "an inferior and less capable music." Poe, indeed, included the landscape garden with painting, sculpture, architecture, the dance, and music, as expressive of the poetic sentiment.

In this fascinating "land east of the sun and west of the moon," where one may hear colors, and see perfumes, and try to incarnate in this or that art what all feel but never see, modern symbolism has found its veritable home. Hence "tone-pictures"; poems translated into symphonies; and impressionistic fantasias of every kind.

Pater was right when he reminded us that in the unity of the arts, as elsewhere, the rule of *sum cuique* holds. "It is a common and fundamental error to suppose that all of them draw on a single fixed quantity of imaginative thought, whereas actually each has its own special quality of beauty, untranslatable into the terms of any other. All art aspires towards the condition of music — towards that perfect fusion of matter and expression that music at its highest exhibits. It follows, then, that the finer the poem the more completely self sufficing is it."

It is the function of poetry to excite or elevate the soul. Hence he who sings sweetly must first have seen or felt sincerely. The truest inspiration instinctively turns to the best rhythms and the

fittest rhymes. These rhythms and rhymes stir corresponding vibrations in the mind of the hearer or reader, as the sounded violin-string sets a-throbbing its fellow-string in the piano. Rhythmical beauty has not reached its full creation until it is transmitted.

### III

#### ALLITERATION

IF our definition of rhyme — the identity or close similarity of stressed sounds in corresponding places — is proper, it follows that alliteration, which is nothing if not this, is as truly rhyme as is end-rhyme. One occurs at the beginning of a sound-group, the other at the end, that is all.

We may generalize thus:

Rhyme = identity, or close similarity, between stressed sounds in corresponding places.

Beginning-rhyme = alliteration; initial-rhyme.

Middle-rhyme = assonance: identity or similarity of included vowel-sounds. Spanish assonance also requires the same vowel-sounds, in order, from the last accented vowel to the end of the word.

End-rhyme = identity or similarity of final stressed vowels and any following consonants; preceding consonants being different.

Schipper, in his treatise on *Englische Metrik* (I, 31), says: "Die Alliteration, auch Anreim, oder häufiger Stabreim genannt, ist die spezifisch altgermanische Reimart und zugleich die älteste in der Poesie der germanischen Völker."

Gummere and the best of the authorities since Schipper agree with him — and with common sense — in considering alliteration, assonance, and end-rhyme as different expressions of the same thing. One of them has been characteristic of one language or time, another of another, that is all. This is concisely put by F. A. March (*Latin Hymns*, 320):

"Nations who unite prose accent and arsis need to mark off their verses plainly. They do it by rhyme, the rhythmical repe-

tition of letters. When the rhyming letters begin their words, it is called alliteration; when they end their words, it is called rhyme. Rhyme seems to have grown naturally into use in the later Latin poetry. It will be seen to appear first as an occasional ornament in the hymns, and become regular in form and place by slow degrees. The old Teutonic poetry used alliteration as an essential part of their metrical system, and German and Anglo-Saxon poets often use it freely in their Latin verses." Professor March elsewhere says that alliteration was essential, and other rhyme ornamental, in Anglo-Saxon, Icelandic, and Old Saxon.

It is not necessary to hunt for earlier uses of alliteration, in classical or other tongues. In the old Latin line, "O Tite tute Tati tibi tanta tyranne tulisti," it extends to the unusual number of seven letters, but such things are mere sporadic "sports."

Alliteration lent itself easily to the needs of a folk that enjoyed "both singing and striking in front of the war." The Shaper in the mead-hall struck the harp and sang "with gesture, with the beat of his voice and of the hand upon his instrument at each alliterative word of the saga."<sup>1</sup> The use of alliteration "served to indicate at once the place of the rhetorical emphasis and of the rhythmical pause." Hence the minstrel's "natural tendency was to conduct his narrative through a series of abrupt, energetic clauses, packed with those phrases, in immediate apposition with each other, so frequent in Hebrew poetry, and technically called parallelisms; the whole effect being well suited to chanting or recitative."<sup>2</sup>

Anglo-Saxon alliteration, according to John Earle, "gratified the ear with a resonance like that of modern rhyme, but it also had the rhetorical advantage of touching the accented or emphatic words; falling as it did on the natural summits of the construction, and tinging them with the brilliance of a musical reverberation." The same Anglo-Saxon scholar deems alliteration superior, in the strength of its effects, to end-rhyme itself:

"Rhyme [end-rhyme] is an attendant upon metre; its office is to mark the 'verse' or turn of the metre, where it begins again.

<sup>1</sup> S. A. Brooke: *History of Early English Literature*.

<sup>2</sup> W. J. Courthope: *History of English Poetry*.



Rhyme is an insignificant thing in itself, as compared with alliteration; whereas this is . . . an accentual reverberation, and rests upon the most vital part of words, rhyme is but a syllabic resonance, and rests most frequently upon syllables which are of secondary consideration."

Alliteration doubtless arose spontaneously among the Germanic peoples as a result of their enjoyment of similar stresses, in languages lacking any finer undertones of phonetic effect.

Anglo-Saxon (Old English) verse, like Scandinavian and Old German, was rhythmical and alliterative. In Anglo-Saxon poetry each line was in two halves, divided by a pause at the end of a word. The first root-syllables of words were stressed, there being at least one such stress in each half-line. The alliterative consonants were the same; the alliterative vowels were usually different, it being considered that all vowels were so similar in sound as to be alliterative. When unstressed syllables were alliterative, the circumstance was an accident, to be disregarded in the rhyme-scheme.<sup>1</sup>

None of the Teutonic lands — Germany, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, or Sweden — led England in the use of this poetical means of effect, which is almost instinctive in the folk-poetry of every age. And from Chaucer to Swinburne it has been much more than an ornament. However Chaucer or we may disclaim "rym ram ruff," it is bound to reappear in pun or proverb, in lyric and blank-verse epic.

<sup>1</sup> Or to restate this in the clear words of Henry Sweet (*Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th ed.):

"Old English poetry consists of lines (long verses) divided into verses (short verses, half verses) by a pause or caesura, the two verses being bound together by alliteration. . . . There is also a tendency to parallelism, or repetition of the same idea in different words. The last half of one line is often connected with the first half of the next, in this way:

" ' Unriht æfnde, op þæt ende becwôm .  
 swylt æfter synnum. þæt gesýne wearp  
 wídcúþ werum, þætte wrecend pá gýt  
 lifde æfter lápum.' "

["Ill deeds performing, till his end overtook him,  
 Death for his sins. 'T was seen very clearly,  
 Known unto earth-folk, that still an avenger  
 Outlived the loathed one." — Hall's *Beowulf*.]

The history of alliteration in English, and of its relation to end-rhyme, belongs to all the later chapters of this book, and especially to that devoted to The Shaping of English Verse. Some of its collateral appearances may be noted here, as throwing light on English use.

Early German poetry was scantier than Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian. Though Otfried used end-rhyme as far back as the ninth century, alliteration was in Germany, as elsewhere, the Teutonic mark. German alliterative verse was somewhat more irregular than Anglo-Saxon, and included more syllables in the line. "We know, or may at least infer," says Kuno Francke, "that the form of all of these [first German] poems once in existence was the same as that of the few preserved to us: namely, the rhymeless, alliterative verse, consisting of two half-lines, separated by a caesura, — a metre whose grand, sonorous monotony was wonderfully adapted to the representation of a life of primitive heroism."<sup>1</sup> No existing poem, however, in length or merit, shows this power in any such degree as the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*. The German *Wessabrun Prayer* (about 800) "describes the created world," says Francke, "in a manner remarkably similar to the cosmogony of the *Elder Edda*." Its alliteration is usually obvious, but the text is not sufficiently certain to enable the student to draw exact conclusions as to the scheme as it lay in the poet's mind. In the somewhat later Old High German fragment of the *Hildebrandslied*, however, though in some cases the singer was satisfied with one alliteration in the first half-line and one in the second, in most instances he used two in the first and one in the second, in the manner so familiar to readers of our own *Beowulf*. Essentially the same is the alliterative rhyme of the Old Saxon *Heliand* (ninth century).<sup>2</sup>

It should be said, in passing, that German mono-rhyme is but a later form of alliteration; for example, in one of Walther von der Vogelweide's *Lieder* (about 1200) the successive stanzas are mono-rhymed — *a e i o u* — after this pattern, reminding us of the *similiter desinens* of late Latin:

<sup>1</sup> *History of German Literature*.

<sup>2</sup> For a sufficiently full discussion of this subject, with numerous examples, see F. Kauffmann's *Deutsche Metrik*; Marburg, 1897. Sometimes the alliterative rhyme-scheme was *abab*, sometimes *aaaa*.

“Diu werlt was gelf, röt unde blâ,  
 grüen, in dem walde und anderswâ  
 kleine vogelesungen dâ.  
 nû schriet aber den nebelkrâ.  
 pfligt s' iht ande varwe? jâ,  
 s' ist worden bleich und übergrâ:  
 des rimpfet sich vil manic brâ.”

The following data concerning Icelandic alliteration I condense from various parts of Vigfusson and Powell's *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*.<sup>1</sup>

In every line of old Northern poetry the verse was divided into halves by a line-pause at the end of a word. Each half was made up of a fixed number of measures, that is, word or number of words, of which the first syllable was forcibly pronounced. The measure never began or ended in the middle of a word. In each line at least two stressed syllables must begin with similar consonants or with vowels; the vowels were usually different, and in later Northern poetry always so. There was no strict number of syllables in the half-lines. In the beginning, poetry was merely excited or emphatic prose, with repetitions and catch-words.<sup>2</sup>

Alliteration, in the Scandinavian tongues, followed natural laws; serving something the same purpose as quantity in Greek. At first there was probably no accompaniment by musical instruments, and the verse had to carry itself; in the old epic metre alliteration was the only bond. In a rougher way, the old Teutonic laws, dicta, etc., though not strictly in verse, had line-pause, stress, and alliteration, the last of which was designed to aid the memory. In poetic alliteration words were often forced beyond agreeableness or intelligibility, for the sake of the beginning-rhyme. Descriptive synonyms were used (as in Anglo-Saxon); thus the hero was the spear-hurler, the wolf-feeder, the steersman, the ring-giver.

“It is impossible to satisfy the popular ear in Iceland without alliteration, even to this day. The editor [Gudbrand Vigfusson]

<sup>1</sup> *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*: the Poetry of the Old Northern Tongues, from the Earliest Times to the Thirteenth Century. Edited, etc., by Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell. 2 vols., Oxford, 1883.

<sup>2</sup> See the preceding chapter on The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty.



remembers many instances of this from his childhood. In Icelandic of the present day alliteration of stressed words is a *sine qua non* in all verse, rhymed or unrhymed."

In the following lines, selected as representative, the alliterative effect is sufficiently apparent even to those unacquainted with the language. It is from the *Raven-Song* of the poet Hornklofi (about 985):

“Hvat es ydr, hrafnar? Hvaðan eroð ér komnir  
með dreyrgo nefi at ðigi aondverðom?  
hold loðir yðr í klóm; hræs þefr gengr yðr or munni;  
nær hykk yðr í nótt bioggo þar[s] ér vissoð nai liggja.’

“How is it with you, ye ravens? Whence are ye come with gory beak at the dawning of the day? There is flesh cleaving to your talons, and a scent of carrion comes from your mouth. Ye lodged last night, I ween, near where ye knew the corpses were lying.” (Vigfusson’s translation.)<sup>1</sup>

The earliest manuscript of any Icelandic poem is of the thirteenth century; none is thought to have been composed earlier than the ninth.

Icelandic alliteration is more melodious, on the whole, than Anglo-Saxon. The songs generally consist of eight verses or lines, four so united that each half of the strophe has an independent thought. Each half is again divided into two parts, which form a fourth part of the whole strophe, and contain two lines belonging together and united by alliteration. There are (usually) two alliterations in the first line and one at the beginning of the second line. The third and last letter is called the head-stave, as ruling over the two others, called supporters. There are two feet or accents in each of the eight verses. Sometimes there is a strophe of six lines, the third and sixth alliterating independently, and the first, second, fourth, and fifth together. In the use of the scalds there was greater variety, and longer verses. The most common metre had three feet in each of eight lines.

John Earle thinks that alliteration might have been developed in England as in Iceland, had it been isolated from Romanesque literature. It retired into the background after England came under French influence. It was, again, for a short

<sup>1</sup> *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, I, 256.

time, a nearly equal rival of the iambic rhymed couplet in the fourteenth century, but thenceforward declined, and had become a "whimsical curiosity" in Shakespeare's time. "I will something affect the letter, for it argues facility," says Holofernes (in *Love's Labor's Lost*, IV, 2).

"The various kinds of by-play in poetry, such as alliteration, rhyme, and assonance, seem all to harmonize with the accentuation. Alliteration belongs naturally to a language which tends to throw its accent as far back as possible toward the beginning of a word; rhyme and assonance suit those which lean towards a terminal accentuation. Hence alliteration is the domestic artifice of Teutonic poetry, as rhyme and assonance are of the Romance. Rhyme has indeed won its way, as in nearly all our other dialects; still it is in Romance literature that we must observe it, if we would see it in the full swing which it enjoys only in its native element."

The north and west of England, as we shall see in the chapter on The Shaping of English Verse, used alliteration, more or less, to the end of the fifteenth century; indeed, as has been said, it has never been lost to the English ear. Modern European literatures generally gave up alliterative beginning-rhyme in connection with neo-Latin influences. Abused, it became a mere tiresome trick, as in Hugobald the Monk's alleged "large poem to the honor of Carolus Calvus," mentioned by Puttenham, in which every word began with *c*, thus: "Carmina clarisonae Calvis cantate camenae," etc. Such stuff is on the level of "An Austrian army, awfully arrayed," of our childhood. By Puttenham's time this business had come to seem "but a fantastical devise, and to no purpose at all more than to make them harmonical to the rude ears of those barbarous ages."

Thus alliteration in English verse, since the days of Surrey, has remained a matter of embellishment rather than of necessity. It has chiefly appeared in connection with end-rhyme, and not as a substitute for it. Without alliteration, English poetry would have lost much even in blank verse; and such new tunes as have been played upon the old lyre by Poe and Swinburne have often been alliterative. Poe thought that alliteration could be "made to infringe on the province of rhyme by the introduction of general

similarities of sound between whole feet occurring in the body of a line." He also perceived that the refrain was a kind of rhyme, alliterative or other.

To some ears, however, alliteration is an intrusive discordance. "As soon," says Tom Hood the younger (in *The Rhymester*), "as alliteration attracts the reader's attention as a *tour de force* it is a blot . . . machinery instead of matter." The same rhymer thinks that the chief drawback of English as a poetical language is the preponderance of consonants; while, on the contrary, another critic assures us that likeness of neighboring consonant sounds, if not too frequent, is an element of beauty. Who shall decide?

Meanwhile, the general public holds to alliteration in many a pun or proverb, book-title, or newspaper head-line. One hears daily such expressions as "neither chick nor child"; "without fear or favor"; "to have and to hold"; "house and home"; "kith and kin"; "neither rhyme nor reason"; "safe and sound"; "time and tide"; "watch and ward"; "wind and weather"; "wit and wisdom," etc. There is also a survival of pleasure, a thousand years after the Anglo-Saxon time, in any mere vowel alliteration, such as "end and aim"; "ever and aye," etc.

"How dear to humanity," says John Earle, "is the very jingle of his speech; and how he loves, even in his riper age, to keep up a phantom of that harmony which in his infancy blended sound and sense in one indistinguishable chime!"

## IV

### ASSONANCE

ASSONANCE, to the English ear, is but half-rhyme, and is likely to be either imperceptible or intrusive. Notwithstanding its effective use by a few of our poets, it plays so small a part in English verse that any discussion of it must be brief.

To some extent assonance is common to all languages, and is bound to appear accidentally. When it is used consciously, as a means of increasing the hearer's poetic pleasure, it becomes a rhyme-art.

"Vowel-rhyme" is a better synonym for assonance than "middle-rhyme," for the latter term is sometimes applied to "internal rhyme," *i. e.*, a syllabic group in the middle of a line rhyming with one at the end. Assonance was common to all early Romance tongues, and, in particular, is a distinguishing mark of Spanish. To some extent it took the place, in Romance poetry, of alliteration in Teutonic. In general, it differed from Teutonic vowel-correspondence in that corresponding rhyming vowels were usually both preceded and followed by consonants, — as in the English *height: shine*.

An interesting specimen of twelfth century Latin assonance is cited by D. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo in Vol. XI of the *Antología de Poetas Líricos Castellanos* (Madrid, 1903). It was, he says, first noted in 1827 by the "ilustre humanista hispano-americano D. Andrés Bello," who found it in a *Vida de la Condesa Matilde*, of monastic authorship:

"Auxilio Petri jam carmina plurima feci,  
Paule, doce mentem nostram nunc plura referre,  
Quae doceant poenas mentes tolerare serenas.  
Pascere pastor oves Domini paschalis amore  
Assidue curans comitissam maxime supra,  
Saepe recordatam Christi memorabat ad aram."



Ticknor, in his *History of Spanish Literature*, rejects attempts to trace assonance to Latin or Anglo-Norman sources, but calls it, like end-rhyme, an indigenous development. He thinks early assonance, in other than Spanish tongues, due to accident (like occasional end-rhyme in Virgil, etc.), or caprice, or unsuccessful attempts at end-rhyme. The Spanish *consonante* was our English end-rhyme; the *asonante* something between our blank verse and rhyme. Castilian abounds in vowels, and always gives the same values to the same vowels. Thus even Spanish prose is easily turned into an eight-syllabled assonant ballad measure, which is a natural and obvious verse-form in the language. In the older ballads, as for the most part since, assonance appeared in every other line. After the first, *u* and *o*, *i* and *e*, *ui* and *u*, etc., were considered proper assonances.

Ticknor takes as characteristic the following from a ballad by Gongora (which he accompanies by a translation from *The Retrospective Review* not worth reprinting here; it reads like a poor paraphrase from *Hiawatha*, and the assonance would not be noticed, without explanation, by one English ear in a thousand):

“Aquel rayo de la guerra,  
 Alferez mayor del reyno,  
 Tan galan como valiente,  
 Y tan noble como fiero,  
 De los mozos embidiado  
 Y admirado de los viejos,  
 Y de los niños y el vulgo  
 Señalado con el de do,  
 El querido de las damas,  
 Par cortesano y discreto,  
 Hijo hasta alli regalado  
 De la fortuna y el tiempo,” etc.

In general, Ticknor considers futile the attempt to transfer Spanish assonance into English or German, for the Teutonic ear does not apprehend it, like the Castilian. But he singles out for special praise Dennis Florence McCarthy's assonant translations of two plays and an *auto* of Calderon's: *Love the Greatest Enchantment*, *The Sorceries of Sin*, and *The Devotion of the Cross*, calling them the boldest attempts ever made, in English verse, and remarkably successful: “Nothing, I think, in the English



language will give us so true an impression of what is most characteristic in the Spanish drama — perhaps I ought to say, of what is most characteristic of Spanish poetry generally.”

To poet and hearer in Spanish, Provençal, or Old French, assonance sounded sufficiently strong to bind together this or that portion of the verse. Saintsbury calls it a fore-echo of rhyme; but the statement is chronologically inaccurate, as assonance was insignificant in classical prosody, delicately attuned as it was to a fine quantity lost to modern ears; while alliteration was in full vigor before assonance made any large mark. Indeed, regular Castilian assonance was preceded by sporadic cases of end-rhyme.

To Mitford, the earliest important English writer on the melody of language, considered comparatively, Italian and Spanish seemed “the fairest daughters of the Latin.” But assonance is of little importance in Dante and his followers; so that of all modern tongues Spanish alone retains it as the distinguishing mark of poetry. In early abandonment in French — the oldest French metrical romances were assonanced — is a sign of its lack of catholic adaptability. But of its charm in Spanish many have spoken. “Spanish lyric poetry,” said the delighted Mitford, “wants less assistance from that coarse ornament [end-rhyme] than other modern European tongues.”

In early English verse assonance was never important. In the border ballads, as in nursery jingles and crude careless verse to-day, it was either incidental or used as a substitute for more finished rhyme by 'prentice hands. In ballads and morality-plays the pronunciation was forced, for the sake of the rhyme, in almost every way; any similarity answered the purpose. Whether contemporary hearers of

“Merie sungen the muneches binnen Ely  
Tha Cnut ching rew therby.  
Roweth cnihtes neer the land  
And here we thes muneches sang ”

thought that the two last lines were assonance or end-rhyme cannot now be told.

It is hard to tell why some assonances are agreeable, like “The lowing herd winds slowly o’er the lea,” while “The breezy call of

incense-breathing morn," in the same poem, is disagreeable to many modern ears, grown increasingly fastidious in this matter. Assonances in adjoining lines, as in Keats' *Ode to Psyche*, evidently aroused no objection in the poet's mind, but do not seem admirable to most critics to-day:

"And in the midst of this wide quietness  
A rosy sanctuary will I dress  
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,  
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,  
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,  
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same."

A similar assonance may be found in the closing lines of Wordsworth's sonnet on the sonnet:

"a glow-worm lamp,  
It cheered mild Spenser, called from fairy-land  
To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp  
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand  
The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew  
Soul-animating strains — alas, too few."

Whatever may be said for assonance, this line in William Watson's *Lachrymae Musarum* can hardly be called felicitous:

"Bright Keats to touch his raiment doth beseech;"

while in the following, from *The Hidden Servants*, by Francesca Alexander, where identity is added to assonance, the fault becomes unendurable:

"Our Master said that a service done  
To a child of his in a time of need  
Is done to himself in very deed  
And is with love by himself received!  
So do not think I have been deceived."

A good example, in English, of the intentional use of unaided assonance is to be found in the lyric by George Eliot in *The Spanish Gypsy*, where she experimented with the Spanish national form of rhyme. The song undoubtedly gives pleasure to the English ear, which catches its melody before analyzing the source of satisfaction:

“Maiden, crowned with glossy blackness,  
 Lithe as panther, forest-roaming,  
 Long-armed naiad, when she dances,  
 On a stream of ether floating, —  
 Bright, O bright Fedalma !

“Form all curves like softness drifted,  
 Wave-kissed marble roundly dimpling,  
 Far-off music slowly winged,  
 Gently rising, gently sinking, —  
 Bright, O bright Fedalma !”

Assonance, more than any other kind of rhyme, is a matter of taste and of ear. To one hearer at one time it may be a delicate delight ; to another at another time — or even at the same time and in the same country — it is either unpleasant or imperceptible. That, however, it still has its uses in English verse is proved by the last extract, and by the combination of assonance and alliteration in the first stanza of Tennyson's *The Lotos Eaters* :

“‘Courage,’ he said, and pointed toward the land,  
 ‘This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.’  
 In the afternoon they came unto a land  
 In which it seemèd always afternoon.  
 All round the coast the languid air did swoon,  
 Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.  
 Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;  
 And like a downward smoke, the slender stream  
 Along the cliff to fall and rise did seem.”

Although assonance in English, as a single rhyme-mark, would be monotonous enough, it retained a place in other nineteenth-century poems, from Keats to Morris, in which a peaceful idyllic effect was desired. It is usually combined with liquids and soft end-rhymes in such a way as to give new effects of tone-color. The well-known rhyme-waywardness of Mrs. Browning was largely due to her assonantal rhymes, expressing her belief that too close a fettering of similar sounds is a loss to freedom of thought and to richness of verbal effect.<sup>1</sup> Many rhymes ordinarily called “poor” are simply good assonances. Here, as in other verbal uses, it is the poet, and not the critic, who has the final say-so. “Only free, he soars enraptured.”

<sup>1</sup> See page 185.

## V

### END-RHYME

WHENCE came end-rhyme, the one great mark of modern verse, a thing so prominent that it is used by Dante and Milton as synonymous with poetry itself?

George Saintsbury, the latest, fullest, and most important historian of English prosody,<sup>1</sup> dismisses the question promptly enough: "Rhyme appeared, no one knows quite how, or why, or whence, and at the same time."

Courthope, in his *History of English Poetry*, does not develop the subject at length, but favorably considers the theory that rhyme passed from Arabia into Europe. It is of course difficult to disprove the conjecture that Arab poetry may have influenced bards in Charlemagne's court, or Sicilians before Dante; but definite proofs of connection between this or that Arabian source and any European result are not discoverable.<sup>2</sup> It seems more reasonable to conclude that end-rhyme appeared early, in

<sup>1</sup> *A History of English Prosody*, from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day. Vol. I: From the Origins to Spenser; Vol. II: From Shakespeare to Crabbe. London: 1906-8.

<sup>2</sup> Under the predecessors of Frederick II (1194-1250), king of Naples and Sicily, Arabian poetry was still composed; "but in the earliest Italian poetry it is impossible to find any traces of Arabian influence, which could no longer maintain itself against the popularity of the Provençal love-poetry." — *History of Early Italian Literature to the Death of Dante*; translated from the German of Adolf Gaspary by Herman Oelsner (London, 1901), 58.

"Su lo scorcio del secolo duodecimo, vale a dire quando i Saraceni perseguitati sgombraron Palermo, cercando ricovero in Val di Mazara, la voce triste ed ardente della poesia araba di Sicilia improvvisamente s'estinse." — G. A. Cesareo: *La Poesia Siciliana sotto gli Svevi* (Catania, 1894), 7.



Arabia, in accordance with natural laws of language and poetry, manifesting themselves independently in different countries.<sup>1</sup>

George Ticknor, whose *History of Spanish Literature* enjoys the unusual honor of being authoritative sixty years after its appearance, dismisses the Arabian theory as undeserving of serious consideration, and says that both rhyme and romantic fiction "are now generally admitted to have been, as it were, spontaneous products of the human mind, which different nations at different periods have invented separately for themselves." Again, he quotes approvingly a remark by August Fuchs that "rhyme lies so deep in human nature and in human language that it is as little worth while to discuss the origin of rhyme as the origin of singing or dancing"; and adds: "All nations have shown a tendency to it, in alliteration or otherwise" — a conclusion which summarizes the argument of the present volume.

The influence of Latin, after it developed end-rhyme, was unquestionably so great that many scholars seek no farther. Their conclusion may be summarized in the curt statement of C. F. Abdy-Williams: "Christianity introduced two new things into its music: the rhyme, and the singing of the prose words of Scripture. The rhyme was invented in the early days, and was used to attract the vulgar; and the setting of prose words to music was a novelty unknown to the ancient Greeks, who only sang poetry."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "We have in it the strange phenomenon of a literature as perfectly popular in origin and use as our ballads, which yet obeys rigid norms of metre, rhyme, and form, and has crystallized into narrow conventionalities of structure. . . . The poetry of Arabia of to-day is the same in all essentials as the poetry of Arabia before Muhammad. From the sixth to the twentieth century the stream has flowed unchanging." — D. B. Macdonald: *The Nation*, 79: 518-19.

Professor Macdonald adds these valuable points in a private letter, from which I am permitted to quote:

"I know of no direct evidence connecting European rhyming with that in Arabic. While there was evidently considerable interchange of stories — and especially of *Märchen* — between Islam and Christendom, the types of poetry seem to have been too essentially different for the one to have affected the other. . . . Everything suggests that it [Arabian rhyme] runs back to the most primitive times. There is much very chaotic rhyme — mostly vowel only — in the Hebrew Old Testament, and rhymed prose seems to have been the original form of poetry in Arabic."

<sup>2</sup> *The Story of Notation*. London, 1903.



Guest is inclined to trace end-rhyme through Gothic and Latin back to Celtic Welsh, say of the sixth century; but Archbishop Trench says that it was autochthonic, — at first with poor assonances instead of full consonances; the happy chances at length becoming an attainment. Ampere concludes that, beginning with St. Ambrose, it triumphed in the eleventh century; “Ce qui n’était d’abord qu’une fantaisie de l’oreille a fini par devenir un besoin impérieux et par transformer en loi. Il n’est donc pas nécessaire de chercher d’autre origine à la rime; elle est née du sein de la poésie latine dégénérée.”

The Elizabethan critics — of whom we shall see more in a later chapter — copied each other in saying that the “Goths and Huns” brought in end-rhyme; that is, Northerners given to alliteration spread end-rhyme before they had adopted it themselves. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*.

Guess-work concerning the origin of end-rhyme might easily be made to fill the remainder of this volume. A single illustration will show the extent to which theorizing has gone. On the basis of a few doubtful and a few unquestionable rhymes in Latin verse of presumably Irish authorship, George Sigerson makes the vast claim <sup>1</sup> that St. Sedulius (Siadal), who is assigned to the middle of the fifth century, introduced from the Irish the terminal sound-echo or rhyme into Latin verse; and that the influence of his *Carmen Paschale* “must have been immense. The systematic adoption by its author of rhyme, assonant and consonant, and of alliteration, must have moulded the forms of subsequent literary production in all the nascent languages of Europe, north and south, as it taught them the art of alliteration, of assonant and of consonant rhymes.” The whole field of literary criticism can hardly show so sweeping an assumption on so slight a basis. Sedulius was not even a significant pioneer.

More sensible, because purely local, is Sigerson’s statement, in the same article, that “In the Dan direach, or direct metre, of Old Irish, the lines had to have a certain number of syllables; in each quatrain of two couplets the sense might be complete in the couplet, but must be in the quatrain; two words in each line must begin with a vowel or the same consonant; the termination

<sup>1</sup> *The Contemporary Review*, 62: 510.

required the final word of each couplet to be one syllable longer than the final word in the preceding line; and the final word of one line chimes with a central word in the next."

What solid ground, if any, can be found in these shifting sands? I believe that rhyme, broadly defined as similarity of stressed sounds in significant places in verse, and followed as a natural evolution of man's desire for rhythmical expression, was certain to appear, and did appear, independently in many places, before and after the time when classical quantity was recognizable.

Was rhyme a proof of a finer ear, or of the need of emphasizing thought by ruder means than those employed by the classical poets? It is certain that we know something about classical quantity, and it is equally certain that we do not know exactly how Homer or Horace sounded to a Greek or Latin hearer. Mitford, declaring that the harmony of quantity had vanished from all modern languages and that the harmony of quality had been substituted in most of them, said that it was absurd to pretend to a perfect pronunciation of a language no longer to be known but from books. Saintsbury doubts whether we really know anything about the pronunciation of Chaucer. Yet both quantity and rhyme are surely matters of pronunciation, and if they mean nothing, or are but miscellanies of uncertainties, we may as well throw all prosodies into the fire. What are the facts in the case?

As regards modern rhyme, the conclusion of the best scholarship is as follows:

There are, and always have been, three kinds of rhyme: alliteration, where initial consonant or vowel sounds are similar; assonance, where stressed included vowels are similar; and end-rhyme, where the stress falls on final vowels, followed, if by any, by identical consonants. All have the same function, that of an agreeable emphasis upon important ideas, in accordance with a desire that is innate and universal, and independent of conditions of time or place.

These three kinds of rhyme, then, are inherent in any language, and necessarily bound to appear, separately or in combination. In the ancient languages little was made of any one of them, though alliteration appeared in the oldest Latin verses; while,

as James Russell Lowell says, "Homer, like Dante and Shakespeare, like all who really command language, seems fond of playing with assonances."

The early Teutonic tongues used alliteration; end-rhyme came to them later, partly under mediæval Latin influences, partly because of its natural pleasureableness. The general order of development of end-rhyme was Latin > Provençal > French, though German introduced it in the ninth century and Icelandic in the tenth. In Spanish, assonance was the indigenous and satisfactory rhyme-art.

Alliteration, assonance, and end-rhyme enjoyably emphasize stressed ideas; the two latter are better able to bind verses into idea-groups or stanzas.

The more highly inflected a language, the more readily it develops end-rhyme, and *vice versa*. The great exception afforded by Greek and Latin of the classical period is explained by their delicate, and now imperfectly understood, sense of quantity. As a matter of fact, Italian, which is really a new Latin, is almost pre-eminent, among modern languages, in the fluency of its rhymes, while mediæval Latin itself — as examples will presently show — is perhaps the most facile of all tongues, ancient or modern, in the effective beauty of its late-developed end-rhymes.

Provençal assonance became end-rhyme by the easiest of steps; while in the fullest of mediæval literatures (1100–1400), the English, we can see how alliteration, with the development of study of continental languages, and with the increase of the vocabulary, yielded little by little to end-rhyme. The strength inherent in alliteration approved it to crude early tongues; end-rhyme came with the time when verse was a matter not of exclamation but of elaborated thought. Meanwhile the chants and even the sermons of the church, with their sing-song and parallelism, were a powerful aid in the development of the new word-music.

In this new music the time-beater was also an effective thought-transmitter. Poe stated the case thus: "Lines being once introduced, the necessity of distinctly defining these lines *to the ear* (as yet written verse does not exist) would lead to a scrutiny of their capabilities *at their terminations*; and now would spring

up the idea of equality in sound between the final syllables — in other words, of *rhyme*."

Still earlier, Mitford's investigations had led him to the conclusions that end-rhyme "is so important that, though without analogy in music, wholly unrelated to melody, and only in its office of time-beater connected with measure, scarcely can any verse in our language stand without it, excepting the epic, which indeed often dispenses with it most advantageously." Again: "Rhyme is an ornament not of a quiet and unobtrusive character, but, on the contrary, so forcing itself upon the ear's notice, — generally, indeed, under good management, agreeably — that, with some of very gross and untutored perception, it stands instead, almost, of all other grace."

It is difficult to understand how a writer on the "harmony of language" could say that rhyme was "without analogy in music, wholly unrelated to melody, and only in its office of time-beater connected with measure." In fact, the development of end-rhyme in modern times was a direct result of the development of music, the ear demanding more strikingly agreeable linguistic effects. But to Mitford, in whom survived some of the Elizabethan contempt for rhyme, it was only a sort of higher drum-beat. Just what he got out of Shakespeare's sonnets or Spenser's *Faerie Queene* I do not know. Still, however, he perceived that the line-division by rhyme was related to a larger thing: "Among rhymes a verse is not the highest denomination of poetical measure; it is but a part of a larger measure, to which rhyme in a great degree gives form and proportion, and alone gives boundary"; and he affably admitted that rhyme was "the common crutch and stilt of poetry in all the languages of modern Europe." He evidently believed that without rhyme, save in the epic, there could be no modern verse. Others have agreed with him in the view that unrhymed verse in French "can be verse only in name and written form, having nothing essential to distinguish it from the merest prose."

The development of end-rhyme in Latin forms a doubly interesting theme; for though late in appearing it was early in its influence upon the entire body of mediæval European poetry.

When classical quantity ruled, end-rhyme was not needed, or



was possibly cacophonous, like excessive alliteration to-day. Non-rhyming Latin poets apparently had to avoid frequent rhyme because of the natural tendency of inflectional terminations to run into rhyme. Trench says that end-rhyme was so inherent in Latin as continually to reappear, "being no doubt with difficulty avoided by those writers whose stricter sense of beauty taught them not to catch at ornaments which were not properly theirs."

Yet even in classical Latin poetry rhyme was probably regarded as a permissible occasional ornament, or mnemonic device, or pleasantry; Latin charms jingle; and Plautus often, and Virgil sometimes, rhymes. Trench, in the introduction to his *Sacred Latin Poetry*, cites from Ennius' *Andromache*:

"Haec omnia vidi inflammari,  
Priamo vi vitam evitari,  
Jovis aram sanguine turpari;"

from Ovid:<sup>1</sup>

"Quem mare carpentem substrictaque crura gerentem;"  
"Quot coelum stellas, tot habet tua Roma puellas;"  
(For many years a stock illustration of rhyme in classical Latin.)

from Martial:

"Sic leve flavorum valeat genus Usipiorum;"

from Claudian:

"Flora cruentarum praetenditur umbra jubarum;"

from Horace:

"Multa recedentes adimunt. Ne forte seniles  
Mandentur juveni partes, pueroque viriles;"

and from Virgil:

"Limus ut hic durescit, et haec ut cera liquescit;"  
"Nec non Tarquinius ejectum Porsena jubebat  
Accipere, ingentique urbem obsidione premebat."

<sup>1</sup> "Toutefois si Ovide en a usé, je croy que c'est par rencontre, plus tost que par loy ou subiection d'aucun genre de vers, ou reigle versificatoire." — CLAUDE FAUCHET: *Recvil de l'Origine de la Langue et Poésie Française, Ryme et Romans*. Paris, 1581.



He also refers to *Aeneid*, I, 319, 320; III, 656, 657; IV, 256, 257; V, 383, 386; VIII, 620, 621.

To these we may add the second line of Horace's famous

"Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,  
Lectorem delectando pariterque monendo,"

in which the assonantal-rhyme *delectando : monendo* must have been intentional, whatever we may think about *lectorem : delectando*.

In only one of the lines having internal rhyme — "Limus ut hic durescit, et haec ut cera liquescit" — do quantity-stress and rhyme-stress coincide. How, for instance, shall we preserve both of them in reading "Flora cruentarum praetenditur umbra ju-barum," or the jocose later line "Est avis in dextrâ melior quam quattuor extra"?

Dingeldein, in his excellent and comprehensive monograph on the subject,<sup>1</sup> gives many examples of sporadic end-rhyme in Greek and Latin poets. So does Norden, who also notes the early appearance of that parallelism considered in a previous chapter, and, like the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French and English critics of poetry, makes something of the Greek *homoiototeuton* as a kind of early end-rhyme, even in prose.<sup>2</sup>

Poe called "an effective species of ancient rhyming" such lines as

"Parturiunt montes et nascitur ridiculus *mus*."  
"Litoreis ingens inventa sub ilicibus *sus*."

He also thought that the terminal system must have caused the Latins to give a greater emphasis than ours to final syllables; and that Horace did not scan his own verse as the classical prosodists claim. His melodious "true scansion" of Horace's *Integer vitae* may be found in his well-known paper on "The Rationale of Verse."

<sup>1</sup> Otto Dingeldein: *Der Reim bei den Griechen und Romern*. Leipzig, 1892.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Cicero: "Volvendi sunt libri Catonis: intelliges nihil illius lineamentis, nisi eorum pigmentorum, quae inventa nondum erant, florem et colorem defuisse"; Pliny the Younger: "Illam veram et meram Graeciam"; and Plautus: "Amor et melle et felle est fecundissimus."

Trench, who was the pioneer in the investigation of the history of Latin mediæval religious poetry, says that Latin verse gradually substituted accent for quantity, and then employed rhyme, within the verse and at its end, as a means of marking rhythm, and as a resource for producing melody. There was no absolutely necessary connection between accent and rhyme; we have in our own blank verse accent without rhyme, while the monkish poets wrote rhymed hexameters, pentameters, and Sapphics, — *i. e.*, in quantity and feet, without accent.

Meanwhile the Greek *homoioteleuton*, the Latin *similiter desinens*, the “*finissant de mesme*” of Fauchet — “*quelque fois plaisante et receuë en prose oration*,” more and more affected all kinds of composition, especially the religious prose of the early church, *e. g.*, Augustine’s sermons, from which Trench cites: *lingua clamat, cor amat; in Novo [Testamento] patent, quae in Vetere latent; praecedat spes, ut sequatur res; quis est enim fides, nisi credere quod non vides; hoc agamus bene, ut illud habeamus plene; ibi [in coelis] nullus oritur, quia nullus moritur*.

In favor of the theory that rhyme is a thing of indigenous origin, Trench speaks in no doubtful voice. Man craves, and deeply delights in, the rhythmic and periodic, — for instance, in the sound of waves on the beach or of men on the march. The Latin language has one word for the solemn and the recurring. “Rhyme can as little be considered the exclusive discovery of any one people as of any single age. It is rather, like poetry, like music, like dramatic representation, the natural result of a deep craving of the human mind; as it is the well-nigh inevitable adjunct of a poetry not quantitative, being almost certain to make a home for itself therein. In this universality of rhyme . . . peculiar neither to the rudeness of our early and barbarous age, nor to the over-refined ingenuity of a late and artificial one, but running through whole literatures from their beginning to their end, we find its best defence. It lies deep in our human nature, and satisfies an universal need. . . .” We encounter it everywhere: in the Welsh and the Irish of the west; the Sanskrit, the Arabic, the Persian, and the Chinese of the east; and the Gothic and the Scandinavian of the north. It is “no formal discovery,” “but in all, the well-nigh instinctive result of that craving after

periodic recurrence, proportion, limitation, — of that sense out of which all rhythm and metre springs.”

Latin sacred poetry was satisfying because it combined a rhythm-mark with a new melody, the one promoting and sustaining the other. Quantity, in the fading away of classical learning, became less and less known, while every one recognized accent. Indeed, “quantity itself was not indigenous to the Latin soil, and therefore had struck no deep root”; so the later poets abandoned the ancient metres, to “expatiate in the free region of accented verse.” Then came Christian chanting, with real, not fictitious and inconsistent, values for the ear. Latin rhyme, thus naturally appearing after a period of suppression, belongs to the third and fourth Christian centuries, though not largely employed before the eighth or ninth. Thenceforward it was used in every sort of way: within the line, at the end, in pentameters, in hexameters, in Sapphics, etc. At first it was “very far from that elaborate and perfect instrument which it afterwards became.” Assonance was enough, to begin with; then rhymes were used only when convenient; sometimes they fell on unstressed syllables, and sometimes they had only the same ending-letter. But from “rude, timid, and uncertain beginnings, rhyme came in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to display all its latent capabilities and attain its final glory, satiating the ear with a richness of melody scarcely anywhere to be surpassed.”

The early Latin hymns ranged all the way from loose similarities of sound, anywhere in the lines, to assonances at the end, visible identities of unaccented last syllables, and absolute end-rhymes. Sometimes the same word ended alternate stanzas, as we would now call them. Repetitions seem to have answered every purpose of rhymes; and end-rhymes themselves, when introduced, occur sporadically. By such means, perhaps, accentual metre, addressed to the comparatively illiterate, became the verse of the church, which, says Fauchet, “*ayans ceux qui prenoient plaisir à la versification, employé tout leur esprit à composer des vers de cadence unisone vulgairement nommée ryme.*”

In the twelve hymns attributed to Ambrosius, bishop of Milan (333?–397), the lines are frequently, but not regularly, rhymed. Ambrose’s authorship is clearly established in but four hymns:

“Deus creator omnium”; “Aeterne rerum conditor”; “Veni redemptor gentium”; “Iam surgit hora tertia.” He introduced the practice of singing choral hymns antiphonally arranged (*cantus Ambrosianus*); and wisely selected the metre least markedly metrical and most nearly rhythmical — the iambic dimeter — in a movement toward emancipation from classical pagan forms and restraints. It was really, says Trench, a return to the freedom of early Latin un-Grecised verse, in which place-marked stresses were more important than accurate feet.

Ampere says that Ambrose’s hymns show “une tendance à la rime se produire évidemment dans ces strophes analogues à celles d’Horace. Ce qui sera le fondement de la prosodie des temps modernes, la rime, n’est pas encore une loi de la versification, et déjà un besoin mystérieux de l’oreille l’introduit dans les vers pour ainsi dire à l’insu d’oreille elle même.”<sup>1</sup>

These points will be made clear by quoting, entire, the hymn which is perhaps the best of the four undoubtedly written by Ambrose:

“DE ADVENTU DOMINI

“Veni, Redemptor gentium,  
Ostende partum Virginis;  
Miretur omne saeculum:  
Talis decet partus Deum.

“Non ex virile semine,  
Sed mystico spiramine,  
Verbum Dei factum est caro,  
Fructusque ventris floruit.

“Alvus tumescit Virginis,  
Clastrum pudoris permanet,  
Vexilla virtutum micant,  
Versatur in templo Deus.

“Procedit e thalamo suo,  
Pudoris aula regiâ,  
Geminae Gigas substantiae,<sup>1</sup>  
Alacris ut currat viam.

“Egressus ejus a Patre,  
Regressus ejus ad Patrem,  
Excursus usque ad inferos,  
Recursus ad sedem Dei.

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, I, 411.



“Aequalis aeterno Patri,  
Carnis tropaeo cingere,  
Infirma nostri corporis  
Virtute firmans perpeti.

“Praesepe jam fulget tuum,  
Lumenque nox spirat novum,  
Quod nulla nox interpolet,  
Fideque jugi luceat.”

This hymn is on the whole a fair representative of the New-Latin verse of its time. In its thought-rhymes, sound-rhymes irregularly put in this or that place, identities, assonances, etc., it is constructively something like modern juvenile jingles, in which the immature mind does not care for nice accuracies.

Sedulius, in the first half of the fifth century, followed similar methods. In one of his hymns the same words form both the first half of the hexameter and the second half of the pentameter (epanaleptic construction), the result, according to Teuffel and Schwabe (*History of Roman Literature*), “being intolerably monotonous.” Another hymn is a so-called abecedarius. The suppression of final *m*, *s*, *t*, then customary, says the same authority, — shows itself in rhymes such as *inpie: times; personat: pignora; millia: victimam; plurimus: februm*.

In the ringing “*Vexilla regis proderunt*” (written a little later) are rhymes throughout, but without any fixed rule as to sequence or alternation.

Trochaic tetrameter is well suited to the Latin language and also to church hymns, as, for instance, in the anonymous “*Apparebit repentina dies magna Domini*.” In this metre assonance easily took its place.

At this time we reach the earliest English writer on poetry, — Bede, — who says nothing about rhyme, but gives the following interesting passage:

“*Videtur autem rhythmus metris esse consimilis, quae est verborum modulata compositio non metrica ratione, sed numero syllabarum ad iudicium aurium examinata, ut sunt carmina vulgarium poetarum. Et quidem rhythmus sine metro esse potest, metrum vero sine rhythmo esse non potest: quod liquidius ita definitur. Metrum est ratio com modulatione; rhythmus*



modulatio sine ratione: plerumque tamen casu quodam invenies etiam rationem in rhythmo non artificis moderatione servatam, sed sono et ipsa modulatione ducente, quem vulgares poetae necesse est rustice, docti faciant docte; quomodo et ad instar iambici metri pulcherrime factus est hymnus ille praeclarus:

“[O] Rex aeternae Domine,  
Rerum creator omnium  
Qui eras ante secula  
Semper cum patre filius.

Et alii Ambrosiani non pauci. Item ad formam metri trochaici canunt hymnum de die iudicii per alphabetum:

Apparebit repentina  
Dies magna Domini,  
Fur obscura velut nocte  
Improvisos occupans.”<sup>1</sup>

Faucher’s comment on this passage is as follows:

“Mais ne trouvant en ces Hymnes aucune cadence omiotel-eute, ie pense que le *Rhythmus* des Poetes dont Bede parle, n’estoit qu’un vers de certaine quantite de syllabes sans loy ne pieds, tel que ces deux couples Latines cydessus transcriptes [“Rex aeternae Domine” and “Apparebit repentina”], lequel n’estant en usage entre les doctes, Terentianus Maurus n’a daigne en faire mention en sa versificatoire.”

In the work of Marbod (1035–1125), Bishop of Rennes, is a perfect specimen of end-rhyme:

“ORATIO AD DOMINUM

“Deus-homo, Rex coelorum,  
Miserere miserorum;  
Ad peccandum proni sumus,  
Et ad humum redit humus;  
Tu ruinam nostram fulci  
Pietate tua dulci.  
Quid est homo, proles Adae?  
Germen necis dignum clade.  
Quid est homo nisi vermis,  
Res infirma, res inermis?

<sup>1</sup> Bedae Venerabilis De Arte Metrica: 24: De Rhythmo.

Ne digneris huic irasci,  
 Qui non potest mundus nasci:  
 Noli, Deus, hunc damnare,  
 Qui non potest non peccare;  
 Iudicare non est aequum  
 Creaturam, non est tecum;  
 Non est miser homo tanti,  
 Ut respondeat Tonanti.  
 Sicut umbra, sicut fumus,  
 Sicut foenum facti sumus:  
 Miserere, Rex coelorum,  
 Miserere miserorum."

In this melodious little lyric the rhymes *Adae:clade* and *aequum:tecum* give us an intimation of contemporary pronunciation.

In the twelfth century came the once famous "leonine" rhyme (the origin of the term is not known), hexameters in which the syllables before the caesura rhymed with the final syllables. For it Trench has no liking; it is useless, he says, to try to superinduce end-rhyme on the classical hexameter — a remark which may also be made of our few and mostly poor English hexameters.

At about the same time appeared the great 3000-line *De Contemptu Mundi* of Bernard of Clugny, or Bernard of Morlaix; born in Morlaix, Brittany, of English parents; monk of Clugny, 1122-1156. The author, like an early Jones Very, believed himself inspired in the composition of these tripping hexameters, so prodigal in assonances and rhymes of every kind. Certainly the world had a new music in

"Hora novissima, tempora pessima sunt, vigilemus.  
 Ecce minaciter imminet arbiter ille supremus.  
 Prominet, imminet ut mala terminet, de qua coronet,  
 Recta remuneret, anxia libere, aethera donet,  
 Auferet aspera duraque pondera mentis onustae  
 Sobria muniat, improba puniat, utraque iuste."

Assonance is frequent, as in

"Pax sine crimine, pax sine turbine, pax sine rixa,  
 Meta laboribus, atque tumultibus anchora fixa."

This easy careless jingle may become displeasing or ludicrous; loose facility of rhyming is a positive distress to some delicate ears in such lines as

"Est tibi laurea, dos datur aurea, sponsa decora,  
Primaque Principis oscula suscipis, inspicis ora,"

where end-rhyme, assonance, and alliterative or other contrasts, accented or unaccented, are thrown together almost at random. Not until modern times did rhymed Latin verse recover from the dangerously fascinating looseness of lines like

"Urbs Syon inclyta, turris et edita littore tuto,  
Te peto, te colo, te flagro, te volo, canto, saluto."

If the metres of Virgil and Horace were to degenerate into this, we can understand, in part, why classic Latin so sedulously avoided rhyme, and why the sixteenth-century crusade against rhyme in English enlisted so many classical scholars.

It is not worth while to descend to the examination of the various tricks in rhyme which amused mediæval verse-mongers, in Latin as elsewhere. There were acrostics, mesostics, telestics; poems in the form of a cross, a serpent or other object; poems with a fixed number of letters, or without a specified letter; those in which all lines ended in *e*, *i*, or *o*; those in which the first line consisted of two-syllable words, the second of three-, the third of four-, and the fourth of five-, while the fifth had each successive word contain one syllable more than the preceding. Then there would be eight parts of speech in eight successive words, etc. Of course riddles, as difficult as Cynewulf's and as stupid when unravelled, were manufactured; and a favorite experiment was to compose lines reading both ways, like "*Roma tibi subito motibus ibit amor.*" Macaronic poetry — a mixture of languages in the same poem — was another device. Its vagaries cannot be followed here; sometimes it was even trilingual, as in

"A celuy que pluyt eime en movnde,  
Of allé tho that I have found,  
*Carissima,*  
Saluz od treyé amour,  
With grace and joye and alle honour,  
*Dulcissima.*"<sup>1</sup>

All this wealth of Latin rhyme, especially as it was under church control, was naturally influential upon every European

<sup>1</sup> *Early English Lyrics*, Amorous, Divine, Moral, and Trivial. Chosen by E. K. Chambers and F. Sidgwick. London, 1907.

language, — chiefly upon those derived from Latin. But this influence was not inconsistent with the independent exercise of the rhyme instinct.

Such, then, was the curious product which Mitford, without very full knowledge, inaccurately described in his remark that “the Middle Ages produced a kind of popular Latin verse, composed in accentual cadence without any regard to metre, and for ornament adopting rhyme.”

Before dismissing this rich subject, it should be noted that the power of producing Latin rhyme continues in England, from poets to schoolboys.<sup>1</sup> The mediæval Latin versifiers never turned out anything more melodious than Swinburne’s hymn assigned to “Aloys of Blois,” in *Rosamond*, beginning:

“Fautor meus, magne Deus, quis adversum tibi stabit?  
Parùm ridet qui te videt; sponsam sponsus accusabit;  
Sicut herbam qui superbam flatu gentem dissipabit,  
Flectit coelum quasi velum quo personam accusabit.”

As Provençal was the oldest daughter of Latin, one naturally encounters, here and there, remarks to the effect that the new rhymed lyric of the mediæval world — of love, or loyalty, or war — had its birth in Provence. As a matter of fact, end-rhyme appeared in German and Icelandic, and even in French, earlier than in Provençal. Distinction belongs to the songs of southern France — in which cadence is strongly marked by accent — not so much for priority in the use of rhyme as for prodigal ingenuity in its employment, and for the development of the widely popular lyric of compliment, courtship, the tournament, and the field of battle. Songs on these themes were bound to appear as soon as mediævalism found its voice; and for geographical, social, and linguistic reasons they first reached maturity in Provençal.

The first period of Provençal literature belongs to the tenth and eleventh centuries. Originally Latin words and half-Latin words were intermingled. End-rhyme was used at the start, in couplets and in stanzas of four verses. A frequent arrangement was that of eight-syllable verse in rhymed couplets; feminine rhymes,

<sup>1</sup> See the Latin translations in *Florilegium Latinum*, edited by F. St. J. Thackeray and E. D. Stone, 2 vols., London, 1899–1902.



when appearing, making nine syllables. Epic poems were written in ten-syllable verses. There were some alexandrines, with a caesura after the sixth syllable. Rhymed couplets of six-syllable verses were employed in didactic poetry. The number of syllables in lyrical lines varied from one to twelve; corresponding verses must have the same number. When, in a poem, verses were united to form strophes or *coblas*, they were often in three parts, the rhymes of the first two arranged in inverse order.

The earlier rhymes lacked the flexibility and variety afterwards acquired, but were, from the first, of remarkable accuracy.

Assonance often appeared. Masculine rhymes were first used, and the utterance of the verse was evidently slow. Any one dialect is seldom represented in its purity; the poets using words from various sources as the exigencies of rhyme and metre suggested. Their work has reached us through many intermediate hands, of little linguistic exactitude, and there is no generally accepted system of orthography. As regards the rhymes, furthermore, some features of the pronunciation are obscure. "When we meet in a late text," says Professor C. H. Grandgent, "such a word as *flor*, we cannot be certain whether it is to be sounded *flor* (close *o*) or *flur* (sound of French *ou*)."

Provençal poetry differed from other verse in that the same rhymes usually ran through the entire poem. The poets delighted in piling rhyme on rhyme, regardless of meaning. Thus the last part of *Le Tezaurus* (Treasures) of the troubadour Peire de Corbiac (thirteenth century) — as given in Bartsch's *Chrestomathie Provençale* — presents no less than one hundred and eleven lines ending in *ens*, the result being very monotonous. This curious piece consists of a rhymed list of authors and books known to the writer.

The forty-five lines of a song by Alphonso II have only two rhymes: *atz* and *ors*.

One of the devices of Provençal rhyme is illustrated in Professor Justin H. Smith's full account, with many translations, of *The Troubadours at Home* (2 vols., New York, 1899), vol. I, pp. 102, 430. The stanza is Raimbaut d'Aurenga's:



“E pois ieu li sui veraia  
 beis taing qu’el me sia vrais  
 qu’anc de lui amar non m’estrais  
 ni ai cor que m’en estraia;”

the quality of which Professor Smith preserves in his version:

“Since I love my love so deeply,  
 It must be that his love is deep,  
 For never will his love seem cheap —  
 Never could I prize it cheaply.”

“When rhyme first appeared in the modern languages,” says Ticknor, “an excess of it was the natural consequence of its novelty.” Luxuriant indeed were the rhyming powers of the Provençal bards of southern France in their golden age: the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. “Rhyme,” says John Earle, “has developed its luxuriance in its natural regions, that is to say in the Romanesque dialects. The rhyming faculty in our [English] speech has suffered by deflexionalization, and this is why the English language is found to be poor in rhymes when it is severely tested, as in the essay of translating Dante in his own *terza rima*.” That English is vastly poorer than Italian in feminine endings is certainly true; but Earle seems here to forget, in our own tongue, such a poem as Swinburne’s *Faustine*.

Peire de Corbiac’s best poem is a *Hymn to the Virgin*, in which there is an originality not to be found in most Troubadour hymns, which are mainly translations or paraphrases from the Latin. The first stanza is as follows:

“Domna, dels angels regina,  
 esperansa dels crezens,  
 segon quem aonda sens,  
 chan de vos lenga romana;  
 quar nulhs hom justz ni peccaire  
 de vos lauzar nos deu traire,  
 cum sos sens mielhs l’aparelha,  
 romans o lenga latina.”

The next six stanzas, all beginning with “Domna,” retain these rhymes, line for line; the poem closes thus:

“Domna, esposa filh’ e maire,  
 mandal filh e pregal paire,  
 ab l’espos parl’ e conselha,  
 com merces nos si’aizina.

“Nos dormem, mas tuns revelha  
ans quens sia mortz vezina.”<sup>1</sup>

French end-rhyme — naturally resembling both Provençal and Italian — began sweetly with the famous *Cantilene de Sainte Eulalie*, the first extant specimen of French verse; a curiously isolated thing, belonging near the end of the ninth century. In it about half the rhymes are assonances and half are end-rhymes:

“Buona pulcella fut Eulalia,  
bel auret corps, bellezour anima.  
Voldrent la veintre li deo inimi,  
voldrent la faire dïaule servir.  
Elle non eskoltet les mals conseilliers,  
qu'elle deo raneiet, chi maent sus en ciel,  
Ne por or ned argent ne paramenz,  
por manatee regiel ne preiement.  
N'iule cose non la pouret omque pleier,  
la polle sempre non amast lo deo menestier.  
E poro fut presentede Maximilien,  
chi rex eret a cels dis sovre pagiens.  
El li enortet, dont lei nonque chielt.  
qued elle fuiet lo nom christien.  
Ell' eut adunet lo suon element,  
melz sostendreiet les empedementz,  
Qu'elle perdesse sa virginitet:  
poros furet morte a grand honestet.  
Enz enl fou la getterent, com arde tost.  
elle colpes non auret, poro nos coist.  
A ezo nos voldret concreidre li rex pagiens;  
ad une spede li roveret tolir lo chief.  
La domnizelle celle kose non contredist,  
volt lo seule lazsier, si ruovet Krist.  
In figure de colomb volat a ciel,  
tuit ovem, que por nos degnet preier,  
Qued auuisset de nos Christus mercit  
post la mort et a lui nos laist venir  
Par souue clementia.”

These end-rhymed or assonanced couplets led the way, after a considerable interval, for a long series of early French lyrics and romances, which were sung and recited far and wide, and which both popularized and disseminated the new Romance measures. By the twelfth century French poetry was as regularly and smoothly end-rhymed as any early verse, in which, of course,

<sup>1</sup> Karl Bartsh: *Chrestomathie Provençale*, 207. — Elberfeld, 1868.

irregularity depended on the incompetence of the versifier; for balladists, in every land and time, are satisfied with assonance. Mono-rhyme, as in Provençal, for a time, was deemed a peculiar merit. Then came the fanciful array — so well befitting the French language and so ill the English — of the ballade, chant-royal, triolet, rondeau, rondel, virelai, sextine, pantoum, villanelle. From the days of Chaucer to those of Dobson, not all the ingenuity of English verse-wrights has succeeded in giving any one of them an indispensable place in the British anthology. Of all that English can show in its attempts to popularize these forms, two of the best are separated by five centuries: Chaucer's *Ballade to his Lady* and Dobson's *The Ladies of St. James's*.

In the ballade, whatever the number of syllables in the line or the number of lines in the stanza (from eight to twelve), the stanzas must follow the same rhyme-order; each stanza, and the four-lined "envoi" at the close of the poem, ending with the same line. The *ababbcbc* system of the eight-line stanza and the *ababbccdc* system of the ten-line stanza give something of the effect of both Chaucer's *ababbcc Troilus and Cressida* stanza and the Spenserian *ababbcbcc* stanza; while the refrain makes its usual impression.

The chant-royal is a ballade with five eleven-lined stanzas, and an envoy, the normal rhyme-scheme of the stanzas being *ababccddede*, and of the envoy *ddede* — only five rhymes for sixty lines. Rhyme-royal is of course a different and much simpler thing: a seven-line stanza, iambic pentameter, rhymed *ababbcc*.

The triolet has eight lines, with two rhymes, *abaaabab*; the first, fourth, and seventh lines being identical, and the second and eighth. It has all of the demerits and none of the merits of iteration.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Edmund Gosse has called the notice of readers to the following elementary triolet by Henri de Croy (thirteenth century):

"Je Bois;  
Si Je  
Ne Vois,  
Je Bois."

Since then the little business of manufacture has been simple enough; for, according to the late W. E. Henley,

"Easy is the triolet  
If you really learn to make it!

The rondeau and rondel, of varying structure, always repeat the opening words in the middle (roughly) and at the end.

The virelai, still freer in structure, rhymes the longer lines with the longer and the shorter with the shorter, in the first stanza, this arrangement being shifted in the next stanza, in which the long-line rhymes are dropped (to reappear in the last stanza), and the short-line rhymes transferred to the long.

In the sextine, or sestina, there are no rhymes, but the six end-words of the first six-lined stanza are repeated in the five subsequent stanzas, in variant ways; while in a closing three-line stanza half of the end-words are given in the middles of the lines and half at the ends. The result of this clever intricacy, when transferred to English, is hardly distinguishable from blank-verse.

The pantoum ingeniously combines all the faults of both the virelai and the sextine by an interminable number of four-line stanzas, in which the second and fourth lines of the first stanza, of but four lines, become the first and third of the next, and so on, the first and third lines of the first stanza reappearing as the second and fourth of the closing one.

The villanelle, in five three-line stanzas and a four-line conclusion, has but two rhymes, arranged *aba* and *abaa*. Furthermore, lines 1, 6, 12, and 18 are identical, and lines 3, 9, 15, and 19. This, like the great *terza rima* itself, nearly destroys any stanza-effect on the English ear.

French poetry, in its essential principles of structure and expression, differs from classical verse on the one hand and modern Teutonic on the other. With quantity (time, length, stress) it has little to do. Alliteration is usually an accident, an ornament, or an eccentricity. French scansion depends chiefly upon the count of syllables in the line, and in a less degree upon accent, which, of course, exists in French, but not in the English or German sense. Such a line as Tennyson's "Break ! break ! break !" would be impossible in French, nor could a French poet pride

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Once a neat refrain you get  
 Easy is the triolet.  
 As you see — I pay my debt  
 With another rhyme. Deuce take it.  
 Easy is the triolet  
 If you really learn to make it !"



himself, like Coleridge, upon having, in a poem with four stresses in each line, four syllables in some lines and thirteen in others. Of the "foot" as determined by intensity of stress, French hardly knows anything; trochee and iambus have little relativity to the French line; indeed, these terms, though used by the older French prosodists in the classical period, are generally ignored by modern authorities, as having small significance.

Mitford thought French the poorest of languages in harmony, and incapable of constituting measure save by numbering syllables, or of indicating measure save by rhyme and pause, rhyme being "the powerful and almost only indicant of measure in French verse." To Poe the French heroic was "the most wretchedly monotonous verse in existence." The French language, he went on to say, is "without accentuation and consequently without verse."

Profoundly as French poetry has been influenced by the classical spirit, the forms of classical verse become mere shadows when imitated in French. Indeed, the syllable itself is sometimes called the foot. In the all-prevalent alexandrine one has to think of the twelve syllables rather than of any six stresses, with a strong caesura, as in English. Rhyme of some sort is therefore an essential of French poetry, in which blank verse can hardly be made distinguishable from good prose.<sup>1</sup>

Assonance was satisfactory to the hearers of the *Chanson de Roland*, and, indeed, was so accordant with the genius of the

<sup>1</sup> If an accumulation of metaphors may be taken as an adequate expression of indebtedness, certainly Sainte-Beuve's address to Rhyme is a sufficient acknowledgment of its service to the French language:

"Rime, qui donne leurs sons  
Aux chansons,  
Rime, l'unique harmonie  
Du vers, qui, sans tes accents  
Frémissements,  
Serait muet au génie;"

and so on through seven more stanzas. A recent critic (Edmund Wright, in *The Contemporary Review*) says flatly that "French blank verse is not verse at all, as M. Maeterlinck and other modern experimenters in new rhythms have sadly discovered. The unstable French accents cannot by themselves, however skilfully they are placed, give to French poetry the structure which distinguishes it from prose. The fetters of rhyme are necessary to this end."



language that it might naturally have survived longer than was the case, had it not lacked the regular place-emphasis of its successor end-rhyme.

Consonance, in French verse, is the identity of consonants following the tonic (in English the accented) vowel — thus, *mille: belle*. It is, for consonants, what assonance is for vowels. But even the French ear hardly distinguishes the two; and in English, where the thought rests on the stressed vowel, consonance, thus defined, seems merely like an end-rhyme that is slightly less imperfect than ordinary assonance. Indeed, consonance, in English, is a term of such wandering meaning as to be useless; some writers make it synonymous with assonance, and Puttenham with end-rhyme.

The *rime riche* of French — *amant: charmant; sommeil: vermeil; orages: courages*; etc. — is now scarcely allowable in English, though entirely satisfactory to the French ear.<sup>1</sup> The *rime superflue* (*offensée: pensée*) carries identity of spelling back of the final syllable; though here French, of course, has no penultimate rhyming accent.

As regards “eye-rhymes,” French and English are not unlike: — *cacher: cher* is no more allowable in the one tongue than *tough: though* in the other. But the French rather dislike *alliez: écoliers*, as the English hardly sanction *rotten: cotton*. In some cases the usages of the two languages are squarely opposite; thus French forbids *aimer: danger*, but sanctions *danger: songer*. French retains the permissibility of rhymes between identical words with entirely different meanings; thus *pas* (negative): *pas* (step); *porte* (gate): *porte* (carries), etc., — a practice discontinued in English hundreds of years ago. One language, or one time, regards a contrast as agreeable which is intolerable to another language or time.

Rhyme, in French, being more necessary than in other languages to distinguish verse from verse, is less frequently accompanied by the *enjambement* or completion of the phrase in a second line. Meaning, accent, and rhyme must usually coincide, even in English; in French they are seldom separated in the lines of the classical drama. With the advent of the romantic school,

<sup>1</sup> Compare page 78.

runover lines multiplied, as giving a sense of freedom; just as they increased in English when the formal couplets of Pope gave way to the liberty of the Wordsworth-Coleridge school.

Masculine and feminine rhymes in French are used more strictly and labelled more carefully than in English, though most of the effects secured in French are attainable in English. The only possible feminine rhyme in French is where the line ends in mute *e*. In *rimes plates*, or *suivies*, two feminine rhymes alternate with two masculine; "in strict classical plays this sequence is not broken even at the end of a scene or act."<sup>1</sup> *Rimes croisées* are simply alternations of feminines and masculines; *embrassées* the inclusion of two feminines between two masculines, or *vice versa*. In English such variations are not deemed sufficiently noticeable to deserve titles; a fact which shows the greater dependence upon rhyme in French.

*Rimes mêlées*, resulting in *vers libres*, are those in which masculine and feminine rhymes occur as the poet's wish may dictate. *Vers libres*, when the term is transferred to English, would more readily suggest lines of Whitman. But even in this free verse of the French, adjoining masculine or feminine rhyme-words must rhyme together, and any given rhyme cannot be repeated more than three successive times, — the very reverse of the system originally imposed by the Provençal poets.

Another device is the *rime fraternisée*, in which the last syllable of a line is repeated, in sound or in identity, as the first of the next line. Such repetition is rather common in English as an occasional device for emphasis, in a particular case; but when carried through a poem becomes very tedious.<sup>2</sup>

Whether, as some claim, the French is peculiarly the precision-language of the world, it is certain that its lack of strong rhythm is largely compensated by the extraordinary poetic beauty of many of its words, considered as thought-symbols. What can be more mellifluous and also suggestive than

"L'ombre passe et repasse,  
Sans repasser l'homme passe"?

<sup>1</sup> *A Companion to French Verse*, by H. J. Chaytor, 28.

<sup>2</sup> See citations in French and English, in C. Alphonso Smith's *Repetition and Parallelism in English Verse*, 23-25.

The late appearance of end-rhyme in Italian is to be explained by the dominance of Latin on its parent soil. A long essay might be written, not on the beneficence of classical Latinity all through the Middle Ages, unquestionable as it was, but on the baneful effect of Latin upon the very tongues it most influenced, — because of its ancient and long-continuing superiority and their self-admitted inferiority. Dante wrote an *apologia* for using the vulgar tongue; Bacon thought to save his really valuable works by putting them into the permanence of the world-language; Milton, who has left on record his despite of rhyme, employed Latin as a superior means of expression; Gray used English and Latin indifferently; and Walter Savage Landor, who died as late as 1864, preferred the ancient vehicle for some of his poems.

There was no Italian poetry, save in Latin, before the time in which Provençal — that connecting link between French and Italian — had produced a definitely developed verse. Provençal escaped the ban of provinciality because it was farther away from Italy and less under Latin influence. "The Provençal poets," says Richard Garnett, in his *History of Italian Literature*, "allowed themselves to be seduced by their language's unequalled facilities for rhyming into an idolatry of the elaborate, which offered great impediments to the simple expression of feeling. Some of their strophes contain no fewer than twenty-eight verses, the same set of rhymes being carried through the whole stanza, and very frequently through the entire poem. . . . It was fortunate for the Italians that their language, fluent and supple as it is, is incapable of such feats, and that, while adopting their lyrical measures from the Provençals, they could not, had they wished, cramp themselves by the reproduction of the latter's *tours-de-force*." Yet, as will immediately be seen, Dr. Garnett's statement goes too far; for some of the earliest Italian rhymers sedulously attempted the same thing.

The discussions as to whether there was a body of early popular poetry which is entirely lost; or whether Sicily or Italy was first in the poetical field; or whether the earliest Sicilian <sup>1</sup> poems

<sup>1</sup> The term "Sicilian" in this connection is generally used by scholars to signify not only the island of Sicily, but also southern Italy.

were written in a Sicilian dialect transcribed into Tuscan, or, as Dante seems to have thought, written in a purer Sicilian form; or whether the earliest verse was literary, popular, or religious, do not concern us here. For us the question is simply: When did end-rhyme appear in the *volgare*? Clearly it began at once, being practically universal, and used with much precision, as was natural under Provençal influence. Blank verse was of late date, and never commonly used, Trissino, who is chiefly known for his effort to introduce it in the late Renaissance, having failed in his purpose.

Perhaps the oldest piece of end-rhyme with a known date is an inscription in the Duomo of Ferrara, of 1135. It was destroyed by an earthquake, and survives in a copy, which I quote from Monaci's *Crestomazia italiana dei Primi Secoli* (Citta di Castello, 1889), 9:

“Li mile cento trenta cençe nato,  
fo questo templo a San Gogio donato  
da Glelmo ciptadin per so amore,  
e mea fo l'opra Nicolao scolptore.”

Then, as in French three centuries before, came a Cantilena. Here, as in Provençal, success in rhyme was supposed to depend upon cumulation; in the first twenty-four lines, cited below, there are but two rhymes, while in the remaining sixteen there are two more; — the greater number of rhymes, however forced, one could find for the same word, the better poet he was. This fetter, however, was speedily dropped in Italian:

“Salva lo vescovo sanato,  
lo mellior c'umque sia nato;  
ke da l'ora fue sagrato  
tutt' allumina 'l cericato.  
nè fisolaco nè Cato  
non fue sì ringratiato.  
el papa 'l su —  
per suo drudo plu privato.  
suo gentile vescovato  
ben è cresciuto e melliorato.  
L' apostolico romano,  
l' . . . laterano,  
san Benedetto e san Germano  
'l destinò d'esser sovrano  
de tutto regno cristiano;



peroe vene da Lornano,  
 del paradis dil Viano.  
 ça non fue questo villano,  
 da ce 'l mondo fue pagano  
 non ci so tal marchisciano.  
 se mi dà caval balçano,  
 monsterroll' al bon Galgano,  
 al vescovo volterrano,  
 cui benticente bacio la mano."<sup>1</sup>

The uncertain borderland between "pure" and "Italian" Provençal is shown by the appearance in Monaci's *Crestomazia*, as well as in the Provençal collections, of the *Contrasto* of Rambaldo de Vaqueiras (end of the twelfth century), in fourteen-line stanzas, the first, in which the lover speaks, being in Provençal, and the next, the lady's reply, in Italian, and so on throughout — masculine and feminine rhymes appearing indifferently.<sup>2</sup> To the same period Monaci assigns four-rhymed verses in the vernacular, introduced into a Latin chronicle as a comment thereon. The assonance in the first two lines will be noticed:

"De Casteldard havi li nostri bona part  
 i lo zetta tutto intro lo fumo d'Ard,  
 e sex cavalier de Tarvis li plui fer  
 con se duse li nostri cavalier."<sup>3</sup>

About 1224 came a song traditionally assigned to St. Francis of Assisi, said to have been uttered by him and recorded by one of his followers. It is a paraphrase of Psalm cxlviii, in a sort of rhythmic prose, assonanced and rhymed, assonance predominating.<sup>4</sup> Alliteration found a slight and almost indistinguishable place in the intricate obscurities of the pre-Dantesque poets.

The oldest specimen given in Giosue Carducci's *Primavera e Fiore della Lirica Italiana* (Florence: 2 vols., 1903) is an address to a lady, by Federico II (1194–1250), king of Naples and Sicily, perfectly rhymed *abbcadabdcdddeefdeef*.<sup>5</sup> This poem Carducci apparently considers the first piece of pure literature among Italian lyrics.

It is to be noted that the Southern poets were never so artificial

<sup>1</sup> *Crestomazia*, 9.      <sup>2</sup> *Crestomazia*, 14–15.      <sup>3</sup> *Crestomazia*, 15–16.

<sup>4</sup> *Crestomazia*, 29–31.

<sup>5</sup> See page 35.



in form as the Northern, though, to take a single example, Giacomo da Lentino, who was a contemporary of Federico II, wrote sonnets interesting for their repetition of the same rhyme-word (Provençal "replication"), sometimes with the same meaning, sometimes not. In one, only two rhymes are used: *viso* and *visare*; while the root is constantly repeated:

"Lo viso e son diviso da lo viso," etc.<sup>1</sup>

Then there were the usual punning verses, depending upon similarities of sound, such as *amore* and *amaro*, etc. More distinctly Italian than Provençal were such repetitions as those of Puccian-done Martelli of Pisa:

"Similmente gente criatura,  
La portatura pura ed avvenente  
Faite plagente mente per natura,  
Si che'n altura cura vo' la gente," etc.<sup>2</sup>

Such trickery, of course, with its substitution of sound for sense, could make no lasting place for itself.

Guittone d'Arezzo (born about 1230) was especially noted for his wilful artificiality and obscurity in forced rhyming. His contemporaries Guido Guinicelli and Guido Cavalcanti (both of the middle of the thirteenth century) are much more normal, while, as a rule, the poems of Cino da Pistoia (1270-1326), the contemporary and friend of Dante, show perfect and regular rhyme. Thus was prepared the way for Dante.

That great poet well knew the intricate rhyming devices of his time, and prided himself on his power over them. In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* he devoted a chapter to "the Relation of the Rhymes, and in what Order they are to be placed in the Stanza." After alluding to Arnould Daniel's "unrhymed stanza, in which there is no question of the arrangement of rhymes," he adds: "And we have said

'Al poco giorno ed al gran cerchio d'ombra.'"

That is, Dante reminded his readers that he himself had written at least one poem without rhyme. But though that poem had no

<sup>1</sup> *Crestomazia*, 55.

<sup>2</sup> Gaspary's *History of Early Italian Literature*, 79.

technical end-rhyme, each stanza made use of the same terminal words, in rearranged order, forming a *sestina*, or *sestine*. Then, in his discussion, Dante passes from mono-rhymes to mixed rhymes, which offer the fullest license, on which "the sweetness of the whole harmony chiefly results." Rhyming the first line of the latter part of the stanza with the ending of the last line of the former part "appears to be nothing else but a kind of beautiful linking together of the whole stanza." While allowing "every suitable license" to "the arrangement of rhymes according as they are in the *Fronte* or *Coda*," "still the endings of the last lines will be most beautiful if they fall with a rhyme into silence." The *terza rima*, as such, is not discussed at length, but he duly considers cases where, in a group of lines of uneven number, a line must be cared for by an accompanying rhyme in another division. Things to be avoided are (1) "excessive repetition of the same rhyme," save as "something new and before unattempted in the art [*novum aliquod atque intentatum artis*]" of the *canzone*, which "we appear to have achieved in the *canzone* beginning 'Amor tu vedi che questa donna'"; (2) "that useless ambiguity which always seems to detract somewhat from the subject"; and (3) "roughness of rhymes, unless it be mingled with smoothness, for the Tragedy itself gains brilliancy from the mixture of smooth and rough rhymes."<sup>1</sup>

Dante at least once divided a word at the end of a rhyming line — *differentemente* (*Paradiso*, XXIV, 16), where, curiously enough, the halves of the word rhyme. His rhyming *Cristo: Cristo* was perhaps an indication that he thought the word too sacred for any other companion. In only two other cases does he rhyme identical words with the same sense. *Purgatorio*, XX, 65, 67, 69, *ammenda*; and *Paradiso*, XXX, 95, 97, 99, *vidi*.

In Dante's opinion rhyme was the servant, not the master.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. G. Ferrers Howell's translation, 80-4. Gaspary (*History of Early Italian Literature*, 262) expresses the opinion that in the *canzone* "Amor tu" "the subject-matter is entirely lost in the artificiality of the form."

<sup>2</sup> Professor E. A. Fay, in his *Concordance of the Divina Commedia*, notes that Dante uses as rhymes no less than 402 words and word-forms more or less unusual, "not including the numerous instances of the substitution of the verb-ending *e* for *i*, which, except with the verb *sie*, Dante makes only in the verse-ending." Professor Fay also

"I, the writer [*L'Ottimo Comento, Inferno*, X, 85, cited in Longfellow's translation] heard him say that never a rhyme had led him to say other than he would, but that many a time and oft he had made words say in his rhymes what they were not wont to express for other poets." So, under his hand, the *Divina Commedia* became the first monument of the Italian language, the first great poem of the Christian world, the first masterpiece of modern literature, and the first great treasury of end-rhyme. In Italian, no longer mere Tuscan, all subsequent end-rhymers were given a model of perfection. "To write in rhyme in the vulgar is, after a manner, the same thing as to write in verse in Latin. If any figure or rhetorical coloring is allowed to [classical] poets, it is also allowed to the rhymers," said Dante in the *Vita Nuova* (XXV). Never was a great literary change more concisely stated, by one who had every right to speak.

In Italian poetry, as the language demands, the feminine ending is the rule and the masculine the exception. Masculine rhyme is most frequently used by truncation; thus *mare* becomes *mar*; *sole*, *sol*; *stare*, *star*, etc. A few words once feminine are now masculine (always with *à*), as *cittate*, *città*; *pietate*, *pietà*; *cari-tate*, *carità*. Similarly available for poetic use as masculine rhymes are some verb-forms, such as *accosterà*, *andrà*, *troverà* (future), or *trovò*, *vendè*, *servì* (preterite). Among monosyllabic verb-forms are *è*, *fu*, *da*, *sta*, *do*, *fo*, etc. Other monosyllabic words are *dì*, *re* (nouns); *mi*, *si*, *me*, *se*, *te* (pronouns); *lì* (adverb).

Thus masculine rhymes appear all the way from the thirteenth to the twentieth century, when Carducci used them effectively. They are more frequent in popular and religious verse than in the more literary forms. Dante used them sparingly, there being only twenty-eight in the whole of the *Divina Commedia*.

In *Lo Splanamento dei proverbj di Salomone, per Maestro Girardo Patecchio da Cremona* (thirteenth century)<sup>1</sup> are such makes the interesting point that, of the 93 words used only by Dante, 75 are found only in the verse-ending. Of the 93, 62 are in the *Paradiso*, because, he thinks, of the necessarily greater number of philosophical and theological terms, the inclination to portray the higher glories by unusual words, and the fact that Dante, "after he had been crowned and mitred lord of himself, . . . felt freer than before to choose and coin the words his subject or his rhyme demanded."

<sup>1</sup> *Crestomazia*, 101-3.

rhymes as *rason: Salamon; mendar: omiliar; dé: lé; mal: val; da: farà; tant: favelant; mescladament: cent.*

In the song *Ogni giorno tu mi di* (fifteenth century)<sup>1</sup> the rhymes are entirely masculine, with the recurrent refrain of the title-line.

Many other illustrations may be found in fourteenth and fifteenth century verse. Thus in the *Lirica Italiana antica*, "*Fatti inderiera, non t'acostare in za*" (p. 105; fourteenth century) has *za: illà: ja': m'à: dà: acosterà: za; acosterò: t'ubbidirò; mi: ti: sè; jè: è: re; più: tu.* In "*Giù per la mala via*" (p. 121; fifteenth century) are *va: sarà: falsità: ha: iniquità: aiuterà: dà: ja: sta: darà: farà: volontà: avversità*, and so on, in thirteen more à rhymes. This use of mono-rhyme also appears in thirteen *e* rhymes in "*La charitad e spenta*" (p. 147; fifteenth century); but in this case some words are repeated, as in the rondeau and similar poems. *I* rhymes are carried through the poem (pp. 254-5; fifteenth century) taking its title from its refrain "*Se mi dicessi, di*."

Rhythm or rhyme, in any language, must frequently modify the usual accents. Thus in English, even such a word as "water" is either water, as in prose, or wátér, as in Rossetti and other mediævally-inclined poets. Proper names in English, however, are invariable. But in the earliest Italian poetry great freedom was taken, of which a full account is given in Dr. C. N. Caix's study of *Le Origini della Lingua Poetica Italiana* (Florence, 1880), pp. 193-6. "The exigencies of rhythm and of rhyme," says Dr. Caix, "caused frequent anomalies in the accent, whereby it was now thrown backward, now forward. Formerly in Latin the vowel quantity was free within certain limits in the *positio debilis*, and the same liberty naturally remained to the Italian poets; thus *tenébre*, *penétro*, side by side with *ténebre*, *pénetro*, and the like, are still in poetic use. But in other cases the poetic accent is not less opposed to the Latin use than to the popular Italian use. Thus, to cite but a few of his examples, he gives *onéstà*, *libérta*, and *piéta*, instead of *onestà*, etc., among common nouns; while for proper nouns, he notes that "the poets continued to follow, in names of mythological origin, the French accent with much greater frequency when these names were less

<sup>1</sup> *Lirica Italiana antica*, per Eugenia Levi. Florence, 1905, 190.



popular and they could change the accent in the service of harmony or rhyme, without running against custom." Thus in Dante: *Naiáde*, *Etiópe*, *Pisistráto*, *Eteócle*, *Arábi*, *Climené*, *Leté*, *Satán*, *Polinestór*, *París*, etc., and in Petrarch: *Alcibiáde*, *Penelopé*, *Cleomenés*, *Annibál*, etc.

The accent may be pushed forward in adjectives, *úmíle* becoming *umíle*, *símíle*, *simíle*, etc.

Dr. Caix also shows that in the *Poema dell' Intelligenza* such verb-endings as the third person plural of the imperfect were accented for the sake of rhyme, *-éano*, *iano*; while in the same poem when they are not rhyme-words they are given the normal accent, *-éano*, *-iano*.

Early Italian poets also changed the verb-endings from one conjugation to another; thus Dante changed *schermire* (third conj.) into *schermare* (first conj.), and many others at will, most easily turning the second into the third or the third into the second. These transfers included not only the infinitive but also the participial and personal terminations. Such alterations would, of course, be possible only in the case of a language in a state of formation.

Other changes of verb-spelling for the sake of rhyme are, for instance, *aita* for *ajuta* (*Le Origini*, 220-1).<sup>1</sup>

This is not the place for an extensive history of Italian rhyme; as in the case of other languages thus far considered, those points only have been noted which have borne upon the general study. Its origins in Italy were, as has been seen, Latin and Provençal; but, of course, the usual attempts have been made to assign its beginnings to the Goths, the Huns, or what-not. The Goth-Hun fallacy, the predecessor of the Arabian, survived as late as Mitford's time; he says that "Italian, Spanish, and Romanesk . . . were compelled to depose the ruling power of the harmony of their parent language, and receive new laws of verse from the Teutonic conquerors." But, as a matter of fact, the Teutonic and the Romance languages, without influence the one upon the

<sup>1</sup> In all phonetic history, we find vowels freely changing into similar vowels, and consonants somewhat less freely into similar consonants. The exigencies of rhyme, for a thousand years, have continually, though sporadically, increased this tendency, — sometimes in the line of permanent changes in orthography, sometimes not.



other, took the same pleasure in adding end-rhyme for the sake of new enjoyment in stress, and so reached the same result.

I am tempted to turn to the modern poets, to take up the far-reaching influence of the Italian sonnet, or to study the details of the canzone, the sestina, etc., but must take space for nothing more than the first, and the last two, stanzas of the triumphant tribute to rhyme paid by the latest of the greater Italian singers — himself, in his *Odi Barbari*, a “rebel” against it:

“Ave, o rima! Con belle arte  
 Su le carte  
 Te persegue il trovadore;  
 Ma tu brilli, tu scintilli,  
 Tu zampilli,  
 Su del popolo dal cuore. . . .

“Ave, o bella imperatrice,  
 O felice  
 Del latin metro reina!  
 Un ribelle ti saluta  
 Combattuta,  
 E a te libero s’inclina.

“Cura e onor de’ padri miei,  
 Tu mi sei  
 Come lor sacra e diletta.  
 Ave, o rima: e dammi un fiore  
 Per l’amore,  
 E per l’odio una saetta.”

In German, notwithstanding the primeval vogue of alliteration, end-rhyme appeared early in the famous work of Otfried, who finished in 868 a paraphrastic translation of the Gospels, — the earliest piece of such verse in the language, and one of the most valuable monuments of Teutonic speech. Longfellow, in his *Poets and Poetry of Europe*, as late as 1845, spoke of it as having been written in “Frankish,” but the old term, used from Fauchet’s time for more than two centuries, has now been abandoned for the more proper word.

Otfried’s rhyme is irregular, often a mere similarity of sound, and subordinate to rhythm, — as in Latin end-rhyme, and in the German rhymers immediately following him. But it is unmistakable, as, for instance, in the two concluding stanzas of his poem in praise of the Franks:

"Nu freuuen sih es alle  
 So uuer so uuola uuolle  
 Joh so uuer si hold in muate  
 Francono Thiote  
 Thaz uuir kriste sungun  
 In uusera zungun.  
 Joh uuir ouh thaz gilebetun  
 In frengiskon nan lobotun." <sup>1</sup>

Here, at first, as in some of our early English rhymed ballads, it makes no particular difference whether the line be regarded as one or two, — one, with internal rhyme, or two, with rhymes at the end.

Naturally, such early rhyming has long attracted the attention of scholars. Fauchet argues that Charlemagne took pleasure in hearing the deeds of kings recited in his own tongue, and thinks that Eginhard intimates that this singing was in rhyme. It may well have been, he says, that rhyme was in use in Charlemagne's day, even in vulgar tongues, such was the vogue of ecclesiastical Latin hymns. In fact, "ie dy qu'il y a grande apparence que nos François ont monstre aux autres nations d'Europe l'usage de la ryme consonante ou omioteleute, ainsi que voudrez," for the Franks overcame the Provençals and the Sicilians, from whom the Italians got rhyme. Joan de la Enzina, says Fauchet, had confessed "que la ryme est passee d'Italie en Espagne." But after this bit of guesswork, so similar to that which we have in our own day, Fauchet wisely concludes that the origin of rhyme is "vne si grande obscurite," "pour laquelle esclaircir tant de sçavans hommes d'Italie se sont iusques icy trauillee." However, "Que si les Provençaux veulent dire qu'ils sont auteurs de la ryme, c'est à eux à monstrier vn tesmoinage plus ancien que la translation qu' Otfried a faicte des Evangiles: ou que leur langue fut en prix du temps de Charles le Grand." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "And now may all men of good will rejoyce and be content, all those of the Frankish nation who have a right heart; for we have lived to sing Christ in the tongue of our fathers."

<sup>2</sup> *Recvil de l'Origine de la Langve et Poésie Française, Ryme et Romans*; ch. VII — Quand la Ryme, telle que nous l'avons, commença: & que les Espagnoles & Italiens l'ont prise des François. — Paris, 1581. — This entire chapter, in its discussion of the decline of classical quantity, the new rhymed rhythms of the church, and north-European pleasure in strongly stressed similar consonantal sounds, was far in advance of the prevalent English criticism of the time.

A good deal of common sense, as well as scholarship, is packed into a few words by Professor Francke when he says:

"The very fact that Otfried's work — 'The Book of the Gospels in the Vernacular,' as he calls it himself, — is known as the first specimen of rhymed verse in German literature, is significant of the tendency of the time. Otfried's personal reason for discarding alliterative verse and adopting rhyme in its stead was his hatred of what he calls the obscene songs of the laymen, *i. e.*, the popular epic ballads. As these still preserved the alliterative measure, Otfried could not have marked his opposition to them more effectively than by introducing a poetical form hallowed by the example of the great hymn-writers of the Latin church. But there can be little doubt that alliterative verse itself, in the middle of the ninth century, had already begun to decay, and to lose its hold upon the people at large. Limited as it was to the portrayal of a primitive, sturdy, unreflective life, it would have given way, even without Otfried's initiative, to a poetic form better adapted to the emotional, reflective, spiritual state of mind which now was in the ascendancy, and which Otfried himself so well represents."<sup>1</sup>

This is not the place to trace the history of German rhyme down through the Middle Ages to Lessing's day, or to consider its splendid achievements in the melodious "Kennst du das Land" period of Goethe, Schiller, Körner, Rückert, and Heine. But one must enter a caveat against the curious dictum of Professor Earle, in his *Philology of the English Tongue*, that German has a better command of "this Romanesque ornament" than does English, because German has more inflectional endings. Rhyme may, as Earle says, be naturally at home in inflected languages, which invite it; but if anybody doubts the equality of English in its use, let him read through, in comparison with German, such an anthology as the late W. E. Henley's *English Lyrics: Chaucer to Poe*.

Icelandic rhyme, as we have seen, was and is mainly alliterative; Vigfusson says that Icelanders are still apt in improvisation, and that alliteration is to-day necessary to please. But end-rhyme sporadically appeared in the work of Egil Skallagrimsson, in

<sup>1</sup> *History of German Literature*, 41-2.

the tenth century. Perfect rhyme, in Icelandic, required that two of the syllables in the same verse correspond perfectly, and half-rhyme that they have different vowels before the same consonant or combination of consonants. In Egil four or eight verses of the strophe sometimes had the same rhyme. The divisions were clear, with stanzas and burdens; but rhyme was not regular, and Egil had no immediate followers. Schipper's conjecture that the Anglo-Saxon *Rhyming Poem* of the *Codex Exoniensis* may have been produced under the influence of Egil, who was twice in England, must remain a conjecture.

A bit from Egil's *Höfuð-Lausn* (The Head-Ransom) will illustrate his end-rhyme, even to those unfamiliar with the language:

“Vestr fór-ek um ver; enn ek Viðriss ber  
mun-strandar mar: svá es mítt of far:  
Dró-ek eiki á flot við Ísa-brot,  
hlóð ek mæðar hlut minniss knorrar skut.  
Buðomk hilmir láðð. Nú á-ek hróðrar kváðð;  
berr-ek Óðins miaðð á Engla bíaðð:  
Lof at vísa vann; iaðfur mæri-ek þann;  
hliððs æsti-ek hann, es ek hróðr of fann.”<sup>1</sup>

Another rhyming device, suggestive of certain measures of the English poets of the nineteenth century, is thus described by Vigfusson and Powell: “Einar, late in the tenth century, uses a kind of echo in his line, making the first stress after the line-pause in alliteration and consonance with the last stress before the line-pause.” This metre is called *idr-mælt*, iterative, by Snorri:—  
“Hug stóran bið-ek heyra: heyr-iarl kvasis dreyra.”

I may remark here, once more, that the term “consonance” has not sufficiently established itself in English prosody to make its use desirable. *Take: gate* are assonance; *took: cake* consonance. One minds the vowel, the other the consonant. The later “court-metrists” of Iceland called consonance half-rhyme.

<sup>1</sup> “I came west on the sea, bearing the sea of Woden’s heart [my song]; that was my way. I launched my ship afloat from Iceland, I loaded the stern of my mind-vessel [my breast] with a cargo of praise. The king has given me a welcome. I owe him a song of praise. I bring the mead of Woden into England. I have made a Song of Honor on the king; I laud that prince. I ask him for a hearing now that I have devised my song of praise.” (Vigfusson and Powell’s translation.)



Icelandic dance-songs, at the end of the eleventh century, sometimes consisted of rhyming couplets, one line sung by the man and the other by the woman. It was usually satirical or amorous — in the latter respect not wholly unlike some Provençal dawn-poems or old English ditties. The dance-songs were frequently non-alliterative, say Vigfusson and Powell; but “this lack was less felt because they were sung and stepped to, the metre being thus unmistakably marked out.” In the later centuries came popular rhymes, jingles, and ditties of every sort: juvenile, meteorological, sententious, religious; of animals; anagrams, riddles, etc.

In the “court-metre” (1150–1222), in each alliterative line were two sets of rhymes, one in each half-line. A foreign (chiefly French) influence was now apparent. The first regular later end-rhyme is in the *Olafs-Rima* of Einar Gilsson, about 1360. Thenceforward, of the more ambitious verse, there was a continual succession to the present day of rhymed poems — religious, satirical, historical, and romantic. “Both strict alliteration and rhyme are necessary in every variety of ‘Rimur.’ . . . The ‘Rimur,’ in mediæval and modern Iceland, have replaced the Saga as the national artistic mode of expression and subject of entertainment.”

The following lines from the *Olafs-Rima* of Einar Gilsson remind us, in their easy swing, of the earlier work of Robert of Gloucester in English:

“Oláfr kongur aðr ok friðr: átti Noregi at ráða;  
gramr var æ við bragna bliðr: buinn til sigrs ok náða.  
Daögling hélt svá dýran heiðr: dróttni himna hallar;  
engi skýrir aðrvar meiðr: aððlings frægðir allar.”

It will be noted that in the extracts given we have feminine rhyme as well as masculine. In Icelandic, as elsewhere after 1300, the poet’s art added to the old refrains and burdens an effective grouping of lines into stanzas or strophes. Of the literary value of the later verse Vigfusson and Powell give no very enthusiastic account. The Reformation hymns, as in Germany, were rough affairs, but always with alliteration.

Turning to the eastern field, an interesting account of the curiosities of rhyme to be found in the originals of the Quatrains



of Omar Khayyám (Persian, eleventh and twelfth centuries) is given in John Payne's literal translation of eight hundred and forty-five of them.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Payne reproduces these peculiarities, as far as possible, in his English version. The usual rhyme-scheme is *aaba*, but occasionally the form is *aaaa*. Various metres are employed, the third line sometimes being different from the other three. A "throw-back" rhyme is common, there being at the ends of the rhyming lines, in the original, from one to seven identical syllables after the rhyming syllables. In the following there are four:

"Skinker [Tapster], since ruin is of fortune planned for thee and me,  
This nether world is no abiding land for thee and me;  
Yet, so the wine-cup in the midst but stand for thee and me,  
Rest thou assured the very Truth's in hand for thee and me."

"Interior" rhyme is simply modern "internal" rhyme, as in

"With a fair-faced maid and wine rose-red, by the streamlet's brink,  
Of ease and leisure I'll take my pleasure nor pause to think:  
I was not aye, but am to-day and yet will be;  
I've drunk of yore and drink e'ermore and yet will drink."

Virtually the same is what Mr. Payne calls "ding-dong rhyme":

"Now the mead with the sound of the 'Thousand-Tales' singing is  
ringing,  
Take the wine the fair, tipsily to and fro swinging, is bringing:  
Up, the rosebud of gladness hath blossomed! Awhile in the garden  
Make merry, for life, whilst to sorrow thou 'rt clinging, is winging."

The "counter-petard" is

"They say that a tavern-besetter I am; — I am:  
That a toper and wanton-abettor I am; — I am.  
My outward I rede thee but little consider; in sooth,  
Such at heart as (no worse and no better) I am, I am."

The "echo-rhyme" differs from the last in that it merely repeats the final syllables, without additional statement:

"Liquid life in the chalice we troll is flowing, flowing;  
In the grape-blood's incorporate soul is flowing, flowing;  
In the heart of the frozen water [crystal cup] fluid fire is;  
Red ruby in crystal bowl is flowing, flowing."

<sup>1</sup> The Quatrains of Omar Kheyyam of Nishapour, now first completely done into English verse from the Persian, by John Payne. London, 1898.

The following Mr. Payne calls the "most curious of all":

"I spake, thou spakest: heart gave I thee, thou me disdain.  
I take, thou takest, thou heart from me, I from thee pain.  
I am, thou art, too — thou merry, I for thee sad.  
I make, thou makest, thou wrong and I patience in vain."

The Eastern usage, says Mr. Payne, "arranges an author's poetical works not in the order of their composition or in accordance with their tenor, but in mechanical alphabetical sequence, according to the letters which end the rhyme-words of the various pieces."

Of rhymes running down through the first syllables of the stanza I find no example in any language,<sup>1</sup> though in Sidney Lanier's *The Symphony* (not in stanzas) are the following consecutive lines:

"We weave in the mills and heave in the kilns,  
We sieve mine-meshes under the hills,  
And thief much gold from the Devil's bank-tills,  
To relieve, O God, what manner of ills?"

In the same poem are:

"Alas, for the poor to have some part  
In yon sweet living lands of Art,  
Makes problem not for head but heart.  
Vainly might Plato's brain revolve it:  
Plainly the heart of a child could solve it."

At the conclusion of this general view of the evolution of end-rhyme in various languages, a few words may be said concerning the relation of rhyme to the possibility of effective translation from one language to another.

The discussion of rhyme-effects in translation is one which might easily be expanded into a volume. In general, it goes without saying that a hexameter line in a highly inflected language like the Greek cannot be transferred to a pentameter line in a loosely inflected language like the English, depending so much upon collateral monosyllables for noun-and verb-variations of meaning. If a line overruns, its unity is lost; if one Greek line is put into two English, there must be padding to fill it out; and when these two lines become a rhyming couplet, as in Pope's

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, page 208.

Homer, the central idea of the verse-structure is modified almost beyond recognition. A similar remark may be made concerning certain English versions of the *Æneid*. In the *Odes* of Horace in English rhyme, a new poem is substituted for an old one, with the retention of more or less of the meaning, and less, rather than more, of the form.

Again, in modern languages using end-rhyme, even where the genius and word-forms of two Teutonic tongues are as nearly alike as in English and German, it inevitably occurs that shades of meaning, in the vocabulary of the language in which the translation appears, make an identical word-transfer impossible in some cases; while if a new word is substituted, the whole venue is changed. Some of Bayard Taylor's renderings of German lyrics are very clever, and even satisfactory; so are the line-for-line versions of Poe's *Raven* in German. But when a sympathetic and intelligent French poet like Stephane Mallarmé seeks to give his countrymen an idea of *The Raven*, he frankly recognizes the difference between strongly stressed English and almost accentless French, and puts his rendering into prose. Thus the version becomes, as regards form, a paraphrase, in which, however, more of the idea and even of the effect is carried over than would be in any attempt — foredoomed to failure — to follow the external form.

In the rhyme-word, of course, there is not only its usual prose sense but an added emphasis of meaning due to position and to contrast with another word or words, and an added pleasure because of inherent music. How much of all this is necessarily lost in a prose translation — and there is also a loss if new rhyme-words are set up in the other language — may be seen when we compare the first lyrical passage of Tennyson's *Brook* with the French version by Professor A. Beljame:

“I come from haunts of coot and hern,  
I make a sudden sally,  
And sparkle out among the fern,  
To bicker down a valley.

“By thirty hills I hurry down,  
Or slip between the ridges,  
By twenty thorps, a little town,  
And half a hundred bridges.

"Till last by Philip's farm I flow  
 To join the brimming river,  
 For men may come and men may go,  
 But I go on for ever."

"Je viens des demeures de la poule d'eau et du héron; je fais une sortie soudaine et apparais étincelant parmi la fougère, pour traverser à grand fracas une vallée.

"Le long de trente collines je me précipite, ou je me glisse entre leurs crêtes, le long de vingt hameaux, d'une petite ville, et d'une demi-centaine de ponts.

"Enfin, le long de la ferme de Philip, je coule pour aller me joindre à la rivière aux pleins bords; car les hommes peuvent venir et les hommes peuvent s'en aller, mais moi je vais toujours."

Examples could be multiplied indefinitely; let us take another significant one: F. Rabbe's translation (1887) of Shelley's *To Jane* (otherwise called *An Ariette for Music*), the closing stanza of which, in the original, is a nobly poetic statement of the mystical union of all lovely things in the poet's mind. In this French prose the whole thought is really transferred from language to language, while the verse-form is utterly lost:

"Les perçantes étoiles scintillaient, et la brillante lune se levait au milieu d'elles, chère Jane; la guitare résonnait, mais les notes n'étaient pas suaves jusqu'à ce que votre voix les chantât à son tour. Comme la tendre splendeur de la lune s'épand sur la faible et froide lueur du ciel étoilé, ainsi votre très tendre voix aux cordes sans âme alors prêta la sienne.

"Les étoiles s'éveilleront, quoique la lune dorme une pleine heure de plus, cette nuit; aucune feuille ne s'agitiera, tandis que les rosées de votre mélodie sèmeront le bonheur. Quoique l'harmonie accable l'âme, chantez encore; que votre chère voix révèle les accents d'un monde bien loin du nôtre, où la musique, la clarté de la lune, et le sentiment ne font qu'un."

In general the more imaginative the poem the harder it is to translate. But sometimes, by a *tour-de-force*, unexpected results are secured, as, for instance, in the more than clever rendering of Hood's *Bridge of Sighs*, into a similarly-lilting Latin rhyme, by Robert Yelverton Tyrrell, formerly professor of Greek at Dublin (in the interesting volumes of Latin and Greek versions entitled *Florilegium Latinum*, edited by F. St. J. Thackeray and



E. D. Stone; London, 1899-1902). A single extract will show its method and measurable success:

“Take her up tenderly,  
Lift her with care;  
Fashion’d so slenderly,  
Young, and so fair!”

“tollite facile  
onus tam bellum,  
corpus tam gracile  
tamque tenellum.”

Sometimes, as in Fairfax’s Tasso and a recent rendering of the *Æneid*, the Spenserian stanza is not ineffectively made the vehicle of the version. The measure is utterly changed, but at least the mellifluous continuity is repeated and to some extent re-created. The “*traditore, traduttore*” of the Italian proverb may be more apparent in an attempted line-for-line translation than in an honest transfer of the thought and song into the different utterances demanded by the genius of the translator’s language. In Gabriel Mourey’s versions of the first series of Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads*, in melodious half-rhythmical French prose, the English reader can at times reconstruct the original — metre, rhymes, and all — from the foreign page before him. That is true translation, not the intrusion of a new poem bearing no closer relation to the original than do the ornamental “transcriptions” in music which befuddle a simple air almost beyond recognition, and quite beyond enjoyment. Let the translator preserve rhyme-word, line, and idea if he can; but always remember that the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Francis Mahony, who carried paraphrase very far, justifies his course in the preface to the 1860 edition of *The Reliques of Father Prout*:

“Prout did his best to rival him of Malmesbury, but he held that in the clear failure of one language to elicit from its repertory an exact equivalent, it becomes not only proper but imperative (on the law principle of *Cestui apres* in case of trusts) to fall back on an approximate word or idea of kindred import, the interchange in vocabulary showing at times even a balance in favour of the substitute, as happens in the ordinary course of barter on the



markets of the world. He quite abhorred the clumsy servility of adhering to the letter while allowing the spirit to evaporate; a mere verbal echo distorted by natural anfractuosities, gives back neither the tone nor quality of the original voice; while the ease and curious felicity of the primitive utterance is marred by awkwardness and effort; spontaneity of song being the quintessence."

The history of English rhyme will occupy the remainder of these pages. Some general remarks may here be given, as bearing on this or that portion of the subsequent discussion.

End-rhyme, since its splendid establishment by Chaucer, has virtually monopolized all English poetry save blank verse: It is, says Saintsbury, to the modern ear so agreeable that it "can only be expelled by deliberate and unnatural crotchet from any but narrative and dramatic poetry." Indeed, narrative poetry is usually rhymed, very frequently in couplets. Most unrhymed non-iambic English metres, when read aloud, sound merely like rhythmical prose, inferior to many parts of the Authorized Version of the Bible. The really good unrhymed English lyrics are few: Collins's *Ode to Evening*; Lamb's *The Old Familiar Faces*; Tennyson's *Tears, Idle Tears*; Longfellow's *The Bells of Lynn*; and not many more.

In the use of end-rhyme in English, for the past five hundred years, the following principles have been approved as generally advisable: The rhyming words should not be of the same genre, — as de Banville says of French rhyme. The caesura should be constantly shifted, for if kept in the same place the lines would be cut up into monotonous little sub-lines. The chief stress-words and the rhyme-words should coincide when possible, and should carry an illuminating power as the poem proceeds. In no case, even in narrative poetry, should the rhyme-words be insignificant. The rhyme-words should be related in thought to the stress-words before the caesural pauses. Antepenultimate rhymes cannot long be used, save in humorous verse. Feminine rhymes are legitimate and indispensable, but cannot be introduced consecutively save in short lyrics. More than four consecutive rhymes of any kind seem jocose. The eye objects to identical though non-rhyming endings, *e. g.*, in four-line order, *perfuming, spring, blooming, sing*. Such rhymes as *fire: higher*

— really a monosyllable and a dissyllable — are allowable. “Poetic license” also allows a stretching in the case of indispensable words having few rhymes, — such as *heaven: given, river: ever, woman: human*, etc. Indeed, I have sometimes thought that an essay might be written on the *Morals of the Rhyming Dictionary*, showing how the thought of the race has been modified by the lack of good rhymes to such basal words as duty, love, and heaven.

Identical syllables (the French “perfect rhyme”) are not generally permissible in English; Chaucer’s *seke* (seek): *seke* (sick) would not be allowed in modern use.

End-rhyme and thought-rhyme usually coincide, of course, in the rhyming syllables, but sometimes — especially when the strong accent is on non-rhyming antepenultimates — the thought-stress pleausurably overcomes the rhyme-stress. This may occur when the final syllables are identical, as in Milton’s *symphony: harmony*, or not, as in Moore’s

“Down in yon summervale  
Where the rill flows,  
Thus said the Nightingale  
To his loved rose,” —

which Schipper calls “unaccented rhyme.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An interesting example of identity may be found in d’Annunzio’s *Eravamo sette sorelle* (song of La Sirenetta in *La Gioconda*):

“La prima per filare  
e voleva i fusi d’oro;  
la seconda per tramare  
e voleva le spole d’oro;  
la terza per cucire  
e voleva gli aghi d’oro;  
la quarta per imbandire  
e voleva le coppe d’oro;  
la quinta per dormire  
e voleva le coltri d’oro;  
la sesta per sognare  
e voleva i sogni d’oro.”

“Unaccented rhyme,” where the rapid thought renders the ends of the lines almost negligible, is also well illustrated in Scott’s *Pibroch of Donuil Dhu* and “Where shall the lover rest,” and Tennyson’s *Charge of the Light Brigade*. Drayton had anticipated it in *Agincourt*, at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

"When few people can read," says A. J. Ellis, "rhymes to be intelligible must be perfect" — a surprising remark in view of the fact that ballads and nursery jingles, in general, are satisfied with any sort of similarity of sound. It is true, however, that with the development of printing a new element came in, namely, "rhymes to the eye," which have exerted some influence upon poets for four hundred years.

Another writer on the subject (Tom Hood the younger, in *The Rhymester*), lays down the rule to "use such rhymes only as are perfect to the ear, when correctly pronounced" — a counsel of perfection to which no demur can be made; but elsewhere he admits that "rhyme is a fetter, undoubtedly." With this agrees Henry Newbolt, to whom "bad or partial rhymes may be sometimes better than good ones, because of the relief they afford to a wearied sense."

Finally, the problem is slightly simplified by the fact that there are some rhymeless words in the language. Andrew Loring, the latest compiler of a rhyming dictionary, gives a list of such words (including only monosyllables or words accented on the last syllable) as follows:

Aitch, alb, amongst, avenge, bilge, bourn, breadth, brusque, bulb, coif, conch, culm, cusp, depth, doth, eighth, fifth, film, forge, forth, fourth, fugue, gulf, hemp, lounge, mauve, month, morgue, mourned, mouth (verb), ninth, oblige, of, peart, pint, porch, pork, poulp, prestige, puss, recumb, sauce, scarce, scarf, sixth, spoilt, swoln, sylph, tenth, torsk, twelfth, unplugged, volt ["a term in the menage"], warmth, wasp, wharves, width, with, wolf, wolves. Some of these, however, as Mr. Loring adds, are rhymeable because of certain permissible variations of pronunciation, and most are not poetic words — *pace* Browning's amazing *Hugues: fugues*, in his *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha*.

There is, of course, an indefinite number of words like *unintelligibleness*, accented back of the antepenult, which have no rhymes, or like *injury*, which can be rhymed only in the *Don Juan* or Father Prout way, by inventing such a jocose phrase as "sing your eye," etc. But all these wanderers in the outer silence of rhymeland are of small importance.

For the stanza, the choice of arrangement of rhyme is wide,

but not indefinite. Save in the ode, the rhyming lines should not be separated by more than three lines, at the most. The stanza is a thought-unit, but there are "run-on" stanzas as well as lines. Even so sententious a poem as Gray's *Elegy* has one stanza without even a punctuation-mark at its end.

For convenience' sake I give here specimen stanzas of from two to fourteen lines; for the sonnet is virtually a stanza. Beyond this it is not necessary to go (Shakespeare's Sonnet CXXVI has twelve lines; his Sonnet XCIX fifteen; George Meredith's quasi stanzas in *Modern Love* sixteen; and Spenser's *Epithalamion* eighteen and nineteen):

*Two lines:*

"Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet 't is early morn,  
Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle horn."  
TENNYSON: *Locksley Hall*.

*Three:*

"Whoe'er she be,  
That not impossible She  
That shall command my heart and me; —"  
SUCKLING: *Wishes for the Supposed Mistress*.

*Four:*

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,  
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me."  
GRAY: *Elegy*.

*Five:*

"Go, lovely rose!  
Tell her that wastes her time and me,  
That now she knows,  
When I resemble her to thee,  
How sweet and fair she seems to be."  
WALLER: *Song*.

*Six:*

"He that loves a rosy cheek  
Or a coral lip admires,  
Or from star-like eyes doth seek  
Fuel to maintain his fires;  
As old Time makes these decay  
So his flames must waste away."  
CAREW: *The True Beauty*.



*Seven:*

"Pite that I have sought so yore ago  
 With herte sore and ful of besy peyne,  
 That in this worlde was never wight so wo  
 With-oute dethe; and if I shal not feyne,  
 My purpos was to Pite to compleyne  
 Upon the crueltee and tirannye  
 Of Love, that for my trouthe doth me dye."  
 CHAUCER: *The Complaynte unto Pite.*

*Eight:*

"Jack and Jone they thinke no ill,  
 But loving live, and merry still;  
 Do their weeke-dayes' worke, and pray  
 Devotely on the holy day:  
 Skip and trip it on the greene,  
 And help to chuse the Summer Queene;  
 Lash out, at a country feast,  
 Their silver penny with the best."  
*Campion.*

*Nine:*

"A gentle knight was pricking on the plaine,  
 Ycladd in mightie armes and silver shielde,  
 Wherein old dints of deepe woundes did remaine,  
 The cruell markes of many a bloody felde;  
 Yet armes till that time did he never wield.  
 His angry steede did chide his foming bitt,  
 As much disdainning to the curbe to yield:  
 Full jolly knight he seemd, and faire did sitt,  
 As one for knightly giusts and fierce encounters fitt."  
 SPENSER: *Faerie Queene.*

*Ten:*

"Fain would I change that note  
 To which fond love hath charmed me  
 Long long to sing by rote,  
 Fancying that that harm'd me:  
 Yet when this thought doth come,  
 'Love is the perfect sum  
 Of all delight,'  
 I have no other choice  
 Either for pen or voice  
 To sing or write."

*Anon.**Eleven:*

"From depth of dool wherein my soul doth dwell,  
 From heavy heart which harbors in my breast,  
 From troubled sprite which seldom taketh rest,

From hope of heaven, from dread of darksome hell —  
 O gracious God, to thee I cry and yell.  
 My God, my Lord, my loving Lord alone,  
 To Thee I call, to Thee I make my moan;  
 And thou, good God, vouchsafe in full to take  
     This woful plaint,  
     Wherein I faint;  
 Oh hear me then for thy great mercies' sake."

GASCOIGNE: *De Profundis*.

*Twelve:*

"This Life, which seems so fair,  
 Is like a bubble blown up in the air  
     By sporting children's breath,  
 Who chase it everywhere  
     And strive who can most motion it bequeath.  
 And though it sometimes seem of its own might  
 Like to an eye of gold to be fix'd there,  
     And firm to hover in that empty height,  
     That only is because it is so light.  
 But in that pomp it doth not long appear;  
 For when 'tis most admired, in a thought,  
 Because it erst was nought, it turns to nought."

*Drummond.*

*Thirteen (roundel):*

"Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,  
 That hast this wintres weders over-shake,  
 And driven away the longe nightes blake !

Seynt Valentyn, that art ful hy on-lofte: —  
 Thus singen smale foules for thy sake —  
     *Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,*  
     *That hast this wintres weders over-shake.*

Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,  
 Sith ech of hem recovered hath his make;  
 Ful blisful may they singen whan they wake;  
     *Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,*  
     *That hast this wintres weders over-shake,*  
     *And driven away the longe nightes blake."*

CHAUCER: *The Parlement of Foules*.

*Fourteen (sonnet):*

"Poor Soul, the centre of my sinful earth,  
 Fool'd by those rebel powers that thee array,  
 Why dost thou pine within, and suffer dearth,  
     Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?  
 Why so large cost, having so short a lease,  
 Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?  
 Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,  
     Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?

Then, Soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,  
 And let that pine to aggravate thy store;  
 Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;  
 Within be fed, without be rich no more: —  
 So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,  
 And death once dead, there's no more dying then."

SHAKESPEARE: *Sonnet CXLVI.*

The sonnet, appearing at about the same time in Provençal and Italian, was soon a favorite form in both France and England, under Italian influence. The normal arrangement is fourteen five-stressed lines, in which the statement is made in the first eight and the application in the last six, there being but two rhymes in the octet and two or three in the sextet. The first part, furthermore, may be considered as composed of two quatrains and the second of two tercets. The rhyme-scheme is *abbaabbacdcdcd*, — or some variant arrangement in the closing six. But in the French sonnet the measure, because of the genius of the language, is alexandrine, and the regular rhyme-scheme is *abbaabbacdede*, with frequent changes in the sextet. In English, the Shakespearean sonnet forms the greatest variation. Here the normal arrangement is three quatrains, — which would be stanzas were it not for their connected thought, — rhymed *abab*; the last two lines being an application, rhyming together. From these usual arrangements the sonnet breaks away in many variations; as where Milton, in his great outburst *On the late Massacre in Piedmont*, begins in line 8 a sentence ending in line 9, though preserving the *abbaabbacdcdcd* rhyme-system. Here his indignant passion is given greater force by the overrunning, while unity is preserved by strict adherence to the rhyming plan.

In the sonnet the weakness of feminine rhymes is sufficiently obvious. Hartley Coleridge's sonnets suffer in this regard, and so, even, does Shakespeare's "Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing," though the feminine rhymes are intentional and carefully arranged throughout twelve of the fourteen lines.

As regards the kinds and forms of verse, the lyric expresses itself in an almost indefinite series of combinations of foot, stress, elision, extra syllable, hovering accent, line, masculine rhyme, feminine rhyme, postponed rhyme, refrain, prose insertion, and what not. Didactic verse naturally falls into the rhymed iambic

pentameter couplet, which lends itself almost equally well to description. Four-stressed measures, in iambic movement, befit the varied portrayals and suggestions of the *genre* of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, as well as heroic-descriptive poems like *Marmion*, and quieter presentations such as *Snow-Bound*. *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, not less than *The Faerie Queene* itself, employs one of the most elaborate modifications of Chaucer's *Troilus* stanza. The Spenserian stanza has again and again been used as the vehicle for translations of works as far removed from Spenser's "phantasmagoria" as is the *Æneid*. Elegies, while generally following slow iambic measures, are ode-like in their variety of rhyme-arrangement. The drama, when employing rhyme, finds place both for the most variant lyrics and for the most mechanical end-stopped lines at the close of scenes and significant paragraphs. Blank verse builds the epic, and also philosophical poems like *Thanatopsis*, — which, had it been written in the eighteenth century, would probably have been rhymed (as it was, in part, in its original form); while, on the other hand, the two authors of the *Lyrical Ballads* ranged all the way, in their respective masterpieces, from the stanza of *The Ancient Mariner* to the freedom of line-length and rhyme-distance shown in the *Ode on Immortality*. All that we can assert with confidence is that dignity comports with iambic slowness and the masculine rhyme; while fancy may trip it as it goes, in a freer use of trochaics and feminine terminations.



## VI

### THE SHAPING OF ENGLISH RHYME

THE writings wherein Old English, or Anglo-Saxon, found expression are, of course, of relative rather than absolute value. In the long period between the first English invasion of England (449) and the Norman Conquest (1066) four works or groups of works stand out, — two in verse and two in prose, namely the paraphrases of Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel, connected with the name of the half-mythical Cædmon; the anonymous brief epic narrating the deeds of Beowulf; the translations, adaptations, or suggestions of King Alfred; and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Of the two original works in this scanty list, *Beowulf* possesses a rugged strength and an occasional aptness of descriptive phrase, chiefly due to the concise alliterative scheme which was the principal mark of Old English verse; but it is too often obscure, abrupt, or amorphous. As a landmark of language and life it is highly interesting; as a piece of literature one would gladly exchange it for a single modern English poem such as Tennyson's *Merlin and the Gleam*. The *Chronicle*, however, has the perennial importance of being the first Teutonic history in folk-language; and the student of poetry finds in its heterogeneous contents some welcome bits of early battle-verse.

In the whole body of Old English literature there is, it should be said, no uniformity of spelling, or of accentuation to indicate long vowels or differences of meaning; for there was nothing to be called, in any sense, a critical public or body of scholarship.

In the time between the cessation of the *Chronicle* (1154) and the birth of Chaucer, the two most significant writings are, from the linguistic point of view, the *Ormulum* (New Testament stories with intricate mathematico-philosophical applications, written in

liting, unrhymed, seven-stressed verse by an ecclesiastic named Ormin); and from the literary, the prose *Ancren Riwe*, or Nun's Rule of Life (anonymous, and principally interesting as the earliest successful attempt, in Old or Middle English, to introduce extended figures of speech).

But even when we have reduced early English literature to this meagre result, we must never forget that it was the first to emerge from the intellectual chaos following the decline of Greece and Rome. It is easy to criticise; it is hard to be a pioneer. England led, when for dreary centuries there was no worthy follower.

Cædmon, who "flourished" about 670,<sup>1</sup> was probably an inmate of the abbey of Streaneshalch; he was of humble — perhaps Celtic — descent, and was not highly educated. Alfred, in his translation of Bede's history of religion in Britain, gives the following as the original of the hymn which Bede says Cædmon produced when supernaturally commanded to sing:

‘nu sculan herigean heofonrices weard,  
meotodes meahte ond his móðgeþanc,  
weorc wuldorfæder, swá hé wundra gehwæs,  
éce drihten, ór onstealde.  
hé árest sceóp eorðan bearnum  
heofon tó hrófe, hálíg scyppend:  
þá middangeard moncynnes weard,  
éce drihten, æfter téode  
firum, foldan, fréa ælmihtig.”

Richard Garnett speaks of this famous bit as “Cædmon's undoubted poem”; and at least its genuineness has never been disproved.

We are not here concerned with the question — or the many questions — as to Cædmon's part in the composition of the

<sup>1</sup> Those who wish to hunt oldest English verse farther back into its fastnesses may turn to the gnomic verses in Brooke's *Early English Literature*, 10; or read the alliterative earth-charm which, according to Garnett (*History of English Literature*, I, 6-7) is “probably the oldest specimen of English extant”: —

“Hal wes thu, folde, fira modor;  
Beo thu growende on godes faethma;  
Fodre gefylled firum to mytte.”  
(“Hail to thee, earth, mother of men;  
Be thou fruitful in God's embrace;  
Filled with fruit for the good of men.”)

tenth-century manuscript written by at least three scribes, and containing paraphrases of Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel, together with stories of the fall of the angels, Christ's temptation in the wilderness, his descent into hell, his resurrection and ascension, and the last judgment. Parts of these may have been based on Cædmon's work; some are poor enough; others have a native strength which has led enthusiastic scholars to find in them anticipations of Milton. The orthography is West-Saxon, not Northumbrian; the alliterative and other poetic marks are of the Anglo-Saxon, that is, of the early Teutonic, kind. Henry Bradley (in the *Dictionary of National Biography*) calls fragments 235-370 and 421-851 of Grein's edition — on the temptation and fall of man — essentially the product of Cædmon's genius. Perhaps this and the Old Saxon *Heliand* are translations and amplifications of lost verses by Cædmon. Some parts of the manuscript are rough, others smooth to the extent of monotony. Evidently we have in Cædmon an Old-English library of biblical tales, as confused with "sources" and "redactions" as the Bible itself, in the opinion of later critics. Meanwhile the student of poetics notes that the verse is trochaic rather than iambic; that it is often, as Saintsbury says, little more than a "sort of half-prose recitative"; and that alliteration compels a good deal of explosive parallelism.

In Anglo-Saxon the half-line preferably, but by no means always, ends in a short syllable, aided by case-endings and verb-forms. This end-mark, like that of the hexameter in classic languages, makes a good termination-sign. Some scholars, it will be remembered, think that the hexameter was originally an indefinitely long dactylic line closed by a trochee. The regular Anglo-Saxon four-measure line is 2:2, two measures in each half-line, with two letter-stresses in the first half and one in the second, the third letter-stress being the strongest, the first next, and the second weakest. Sometimes there is only one stress in the first half-line. Slurs always come at the beginning of the line or half-line; Cædmon puts them after the line-pause.

Vigfusson, in the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, tabulates the descent of "Cædmon's Old Long Line" with impossible minuteness. Of course, in stressed alliterative verse there may be al-

most every possible combination of stresses of identical or similar sounds, in lines long or short, repetitious or different, poetically exact or mere loose half-prose. Sometimes extra alliterations are not stressed; sometimes repeated words answer the alliterative purpose. Now and then a sort of two-line or couplet effect is given by the endings of sentences; this comes chiefly in dramatic or sententious verse. Perhaps two average lines, in any literature, are about enough for the full expression or turning of a thought.

Like a trumpet-call was the outburst of the first lines of *Beowulf* (about 700 A. D.):

“Hwæt! we Gār-Dena in gear-dagum  
 peód cyninga prym gefrunon,  
 hû þá æðelingas ellen fremedon.  
 Oft Scyld Scéfing sceaðena þreátum,  
 monegum mægðum meodo-setta oftéáh.  
 Egsode eorl, syððan ærest wearð  
 feá-sceaft funden: he þæs frôfre gebád,  
 weðx under wolcnum, weorð-myndum ðáh,  
 ðð þæt him æghwylc þára ymb-sittendra  
 ofer hron-ráde hýran scolde,  
 gomban gyldan: þæt wæs gôð cyning!  
 þæm eafera wæs æfter cenned  
 geong in geardum, þone god sende  
 folce tð frôfre. fyren-þearfe ongeat,  
 þæt hie ær drugon aldor-leáse  
 lange hwíle. Him þæs líf-freá,  
 wuldres wealdend, worold-áre forgeaf.  
 Beówulf wæs breme, (blæd wide sprang)  
 Scyldes eafera Scede-Landum in.”

Professor John Leslie Hall's excellent translation of *Beowulf*, which is alliterative but not line-for-line, retains much of the spirit as well as the form of the original, and may well be read by those unfamiliar with Anglo-Saxon. But I will give here Professor John Earle's prose version of the above nineteen lines of this “English epic of the fourteenth century,” because of his rendering of the very first word:

“What ho! we have heard tell of the grandeur of the imperial kings of the spear-bearing Danes in former days, how those ethelings promoted bravery. Often did Scyld of the Sheaf wrest from harrying bands, from many tribes, their convivial seats; the dread of him fell upon warriors, whereas he had at the first been a



lonely foundling; — of all that [humiliation] he lived to experience solace; he waxed great under the welkin, he flourished with trophies, till that every one of the neighboring peoples over the sea were constrained to obey him, and pay trewage: — that was a good king!

“To him was born a son to come after him, a young [prince] in the palace, whom God sent for the people’s comfort. He [God] knew the hard calamity, what they had erst endured when they were without a king for a long while; and in consideration thereof the Lord of Life, the Ruler of Glory, accorded to them a time of prosperity.

“Beowulf [i. e., Beaw] was renowned, his fame sprang wide; heir of Scyld in the Scedelands.”

Notwithstanding its roughness, this old tale of Beowulf the Scylding and Beowulf the Goth shows that alliteration was abundantly able to take care of itself as an indigenous and in some ways powerful poetic form.

If the *Phœnix*, a paraphrase of the *Carmen de Phenice* ascribed to Lactantius, were an original piece of Anglo-Saxon verse, it would be entitled to be called the most poetical product of the English mind prior to 1200. How rhythmical is the following, from its description of the Happy Land:

“Ne mæg ðær rén ne snáw  
ne forstes fnæst, ne fýres blæst,<sup>1</sup>  
ne hágles hryre, ne hrímes dryre  
ne sunnan hætu, ne síncald,  
ne wearm weder, ne winterscúr  
wihte gewirdan, ac se wong seomað  
eádig and onsund; is ðæt æðele lond  
blóstmum geblówen. Beorgas ðær ne muntas  
steápe ne stondað, ne stánclifu  
heáh hlífað, swá hér mid ús,  
ne dena ne daln, ne dúnscrafu,  
hléwas ne hlincas, ne ðær hleonað ó  
unsméðes wiht; ac se æðela feld  
wridað under wolcnum wynnum geblówen.”

In the above, besides alliteration and a splendid swing, are assonance and a suggestion of end-rhyme.

The last lines of the poem are a curious macaronic of Anglo-Saxon and Latin:

"hafað us alyfed  
 lucis auctor  
 ðæt we motun hér  
 merveri  
 gód-dædum begietan  
 gaudia in celo  
 ðær we motun  
 maxima regna  
 secan and gesittan  
 sedibus altis  
 lifgan in lisse  
 lucis et pacis  
 agan eardunga  
 alma letitia  
 brucan blæd-daga  
 blandem et mitem  
 geseon sigora fréan  
 sine fine  
 and him lof singan  
 laude perenne  
 eadge mid englum  
 alleluia." <sup>1</sup>

From the time of Cynewulf's *Crist*, the *Phænix* paraphrase, and the fine poem *Judith*, all of which may be assigned to the years between 750 and 780, until the end of the eleventh century,

<sup>1</sup> "Us hath allowed  
 [the] Author of light  
 that we may here  
 deserve,  
 by good deeds obtain,  
 joys in heaven,  
 where we may  
 [the] amplest realms  
 seek, and sit  
 on lofty seats,  
 live in the comfort  
 of light and peace,  
 possess dwellings  
 pleasant of joy,  
 prosperous days enjoy,  
 bland and mild;  
 [the] Lord of triumphs see  
 without end,  
 and to him sing praise,  
 with laud perpetual,  
 happy with angels.  
 Alleluia!"

alliteration grew less obedient to its earlier rules, and was employed as the particular singer chose.

In the *Battle of Maldon* (about 991) were rudiments of end-rhyme, e. g., *bigstodon: lagon: lagon: gesealdon: noldon* (perhaps accidental); and many lines near each other ended with the same word.

The refrain of the older *Deor's Lament* has a pleasing effect of thought-rhyme: "Ðas oferode, ðisses swa maeg:" "that was withstood, so may this be!"

In Old-English verse of the tenth century the rhyme of parallelism is often present; the important sentence is continually doubled in different words, almost precisely as in Hebrew. So it was in later Icelandic; the repetition causing new light to shine on the idea.

End-rhyme was, in its first appearances, combined with alliteration in England, as in Iceland and Scandinavia. Accidental end-rhyme [internal rhyme] is certain to appear in alliterative verse, and so it is not strange that we find it in one passage of Cynewulf's *Elene* (lines 114-5):

"Ðær wæs borda gebrec ond beorna geprec,  
heard handgeswing ond herga gring."

In the second of these lines there is really nothing but an eye-rhyme, as *-swing* is not an accented syllable.

Cynewulf, whose authorship of *Elene* and *Crist* is pretty well established, is thought by some to have written the *Phoenix*, the *Dream of the Rood*, and even the "Rhyming Poem" of the *Codex Exoniensis*.

The last-named apparently belongs to the second quarter of the tenth century. It has alliteration and also masculine and feminine end-rhymes. Of literary merit it possesses not a vestige. Nobody knows its author, or can definitely account for its multiplication of end-rhymes; but the fashion of them was growing, all around, at the time of its writing; and we have already gone far enough to see that in the ninth and tenth centuries, in any European country having verse of any kind, the non-appearance of end-rhyme would have been a greater marvel than its appearance. It is true, as Garnett says, that "Latin was (in the

ninth century) the only language in which the literary class, apart from the makers of minstrelsy, cared to express itself"; but Latin end-rhymed verse was perfectly familiar in England at that time. It was constantly growing easier to write concise rhyming explosives like the

"Me lifes onlah. se Pis lecht onwrah.  
and paet torhte geteoh. tillice onwrah.  
glaed waes ic gliwum. glenged hiwum.  
blissa bleoum. blostma hiwum,"

etc., of this poem, which was probably produced for the sake of the jingle. Elsewhere it has *wongum: gongum; longum: getongum; aweaht: ofertheaht; gengdon: mengdon: lengdon: glengdon; glad: inbrad: bi-glad: had: gad: rad: gebad.*

Schipper suggests that it may have come from the work and influence of the Scandinavian poet Egil Skallagrímsson in his visits to England; but he adduces no proof.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Brut* of Layamon (about 1210) alliteration is weak or absent, and there are some end-rhymes, such as *brother: other; might: right; care: fare.* Evidently the poet, writing in a transitional period, felt at liberty to use alliteration, assonance (if, indeed, he noticed it at all), and end-rhyme as he chose. Four stresses are the rule. In his ear *walden: duden; daei: maei; Haengest: hendest* were equally good; the scansion was the necessary thing. Saintsbury says that Layamon "is, so to speak, staggering towards more rhyme. . . . It is scarcely too wild a flight to call the work of Layamon the workshop, the experimental laboratory, of true English prosody."<sup>2</sup>

In general, Layamon used either alliteration or end-rhyme in a given line, not both together.

If this were a history of English prosody, not rhyme, much would need to be said of that unique poem, the *Ormulum* of the Augustinian monk Orm or Ormin. It is a diffuse and monotonous summary of Gospel contents as understood by the pious and simple-minded author. The "Gospel's holy lore" is com-

<sup>1</sup> Of it Thorpe, its first editor, naïvely said: "This poem I do not understand, and am therefore unable to translate." As Stedman remarked about Browning's *Sordello*, it is not worth the trouble.

<sup>2</sup> *History of English Prosody*, 51, 76.



bined, according to the mediæval fashion, with all sorts of fancies, which are set forth as having equal force with the Bible words themselves, Thus Christ fasted in the wilderness because forty is four times ten. The three persons of the Trinity, the three powers of the mind (insight, memory, and attention), and the four elements of matter (earth, air, fire, and water), added together make the ten, which, multiplied by the four points of the compass, makes forty, etc. The New Testament stories are set forth with almost indefinite repetitions (the poem has twenty thousand lines) of word, line, or idea; the whole being expressed in a spelling-reform system devised by the author, which, like so many of its successors, was ignored by everybody else. But the *Ormulum* has two great charms: the sweet simplicity of its gentle writer, and its really marvellous smoothness of seven-stressed lines (or four-stressed, alternating with three, as now ordinarily printed). There is hardly a poem in all English literature which, unrhymed, leaves so strong an impression of that finish which we generally associate with rhyme.

But it is better to quote a few lines of the *Ormulum* than to talk about it. Here is the passage in which Orm, with his usual frankness, speaks of a necessity not unknown to thousands of his verse-mongering followers:

“Icc hafe sammnedd o piss boc  
 þa Goddspelless neh alle,  
 þatt sinndenn o þe messeboe  
 Inn all þe yer att messe.  
 ɔ aʒʒ affterr þe Goddspell stannt  
 þatt tatt te Goddspell meneþþ,  
 þatt mann birrþ spellenn to þe folle  
 Off þeʒʒre sawle nede;  
 ɔ ʒet tær tekenn mare inoh  
 þu shallt tæronne findenn,  
 Off þatt tatt Cristess hallʒhe þed  
 Birrþ trowwenn wel ɔ follʒhenn.  
 Icc hafe sett her o piss boc  
 Amang Goddspelless wordess,  
 All þurh me selfenn, maniʒ word  
 þe rime swa to fillenn;  
 Acc þu shallt findenn þatt min word,  
 Eʒʒwhær pær itt iss ekedd,  
 Maʒʒ hellpenn þa þatt redenn itt  
 To sen ɔ tunnderrstanndenn  
 All þess te better hu þeʒʒm birrþ

Þe Goddspell unnderrstannðenn;  
 Ʒ forrþi trowwe icc þatt te birrþ  
 Wel þolenn mine wordess,  
 EƷƷwhær þær þu shallt findenn hemm  
 Amang Goddspelless wordess.  
 For whase mot to læwedd folle  
 Larspell off Goddspell tellenn,  
 He mot wel ekenn maniƷ word  
 Amang Goddspelless wordess.  
 Ʒ icc ne mihhte nohht min ferss  
 AƷƷ wiþþ Goddspelless wordess  
 Wel fillenn all, Ʒ all forrþi  
 Sholde icc wel ofte nede  
 Amang Goddspelless wordess don  
 Min word, min ferss to fillenn."

In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, according to several investigators, Norman-French lyrics, produced under troubadour influence, were familiar in England, and were copied, to some extent, in the vernacular. But few such songs survive, and those few are of small merit. Rhymes and stanzas, suggestive of Romance models, there are; but the native conciseness, almost bluntness, lends itself ill to the foreign forms. The gem of all the English songs of the period is the most natural of all: the lovely little

"Sumer is icumen in,  
 Lhude sing cuccu!  
 Groweth sed and bloweth med,  
 And springeth the wude nu.

"Awe bleteth after lomb,  
 Llouth after calve cu:  
 Bulluc sterteth, bucke verteth.  
 Murie sing cuccu!

"Cuccu! cuccu! wel singes thu cuccu  
 Ne swik thu naver nu.  
 Sing cuccu! nu, sing cuccu!  
 Sing cuccu! sing cuccu, nu!"

In the romances now beginning to abound, end-rhyme was used freely. In *King Horn* (1200-50) sometimes repetitions answered the purpose; thus in lines 753-4 we have

"þat him scholde londe  
 In Westene londe,"

and in 757-8

"To lond he him sette  
 And fot on stirop sette;"

but for the most part the lines are divided into two three-stressed halves by ordinary end-rhyme, as *blīpe: lype; singe: kinge; Horn: born*, etc.

The six-stressed line, with or without internal rhyme, narrowly escaped becoming the normal English measure at this period, especially as it was used (without internal rhyme) by Robert of Gloucester (flourished 1260–1300) with distinguished success. Indeed, Robert was the most powerful and pleasing English end-rhymer before Chaucer. His alexandrines, used in connection with seven-stressed lines, have a fine swing, when at their best; and if the strong caesural pause becomes rather tiresome, the genius of the language, then in an experimental state, must be blamed, rather than the poet. Let him who wishes to learn what vigor was possible in rhymed narrative in English of the thirteenth century, read Robert of Gloucester's story of Lear and his Daughters straight through.

Robert Manning, or Robert of Brunne, who wrote between 1290 and 1340, was the author of *Handling Sin*, a long dull poem, partly translation, partly paraphrase, and partly original. The metre is of the roughest and the literary merit of the smallest. Lines have four, five, six, or seven stresses, as you may be able to count them; and the swinging regularity of Robert of Gloucester is absent. But the miscellany is interesting, in the present study, because Manning speaks of

"That tyme  
That I began thys English rhyme;"

and because he mentions, as rhyme-forms discarded because not easily intelligible, "ryme couwee," "strangere," "entrelace," and "baston":

"I made it not for to be praysed,  
Bot at þe lewed menn were aysed.  
If it were made in ryme couwee,  
Or in strangere or entrelace,  
þat rede Inglis it ere inowe  
þat couthe not haf coppled a kowe,  
þat outhere in couwee or in baston  
Som suld haf ben fordon,  
So þat fele men þat it herde  
Suld not witte howe þat it ferde."

“Rime couée”—or “tail-rhyme,” *versus caudati*, *Schweifreim*—meant the insertion of shorter lines rhyming together—usually the third, sixth, etc. The device is as ancient as it is common, and may be varied in almost any way, being closely akin to the refrain. The resultant merit is a certain variety; the correspondent demerit is a hitchy monotony in the very medium introduced for variety’s sake. On the whole, no first-class work was ever done in this stanza; and Chaucer’s satire at its expense, in *Sir Thopas*, still forms its just obituary. “Strangere” and “baston” are of unknown meaning; some say that the latter means “stanza”; Saintsbury calls it a six-line stanza of four long and two short lines; but his specimen, ending with the word in question, evidently means *a* stanza, not the particular form. “Interlaced” is alternate.

When an idea is bound together by parallelism, antithesis, refrain, or even the completion of sense which a rhymed couplet gives, the idea-group which we call the stanza is not far distant. Naturally, therefore, at this time the poem entitled *The Pearl* (fourteenth century) uses it with good effect. At first it seems surprising that we have the creation of a twelve-line stanza in the apparently complicated metre *ababababbebe*, anticipating, as it were, the Spenserian stanza and the sonnet; but repeated rhymes were familiar, centuries earlier, in Provençal and other languages; and we must remember that English could now look to such finished models as the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia*. Again, we are in Chaucer’s century; and in literature, as in physical nature, catastrophism—the sudden development of long-slumbering causes—must be taken into account.

The end-rhymes in *The Pearl* are overlaid by an elaborate system of alliteration, which distracts attention from them. Not even the later mellifluousness of Surrey and Wyatt could make agreeable the combination of three or four alliterations in each one of a succession of end-rhymed lines; and the author of *The Pearl* was no Surrey.<sup>1</sup> Alliteration, our most ancient form of

<sup>1</sup> The reader should be referred, however, to the opinion of the chief editor of the poem, Israel Gollancz. He thinks that it contains an important and beautiful stanza-form, without known models; and that the poem virtually constitutes a sonnet-sequence at a very early day. Saintsbury is not less enthusiastic. See his *History of English Prosody*,



rhyme, has never lost its beauty and value; but its nature is so strongly assertive that it does not comport with a rival, unless it appear in moderation, and as an occasional emphasis or adornment. This fact Chaucer, who was contemporary with the authors of *The Pearl* and *Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight*, saw as they did not. The best touch of poetic art given in *The Pearl* is not its alliteration or end-rhyme, but its employment, to an extent previously unknown in English, of an ingeniously variant refrain.

Before Chaucer and the subsequent rule of end-rhyme from his day to ours, William Langland, in his *Vision of Piers Plowman*, was the last great recurren to the methods of alliterative English poetry, — because he was the last singer of and from the common people. Almost contemporary with Chaucer, Langland (1330?–1406?) turned toward the past, while Chaucer led the way for all the future. The transfer from alliteration to end-rhyme had come before Langland's day, but he was strong enough, both as thinker and poet, to revive the old rhyme art in one noble strain. Henceforward, in minor romance or battle ballad, or in the experiments of the scholastic, it might lead a lingering life, but its day was past, save as an adornment of its triumphant successor. After the Norman conquest, new forces from the rich fields of Romance poetry were too strong to be resisted in England, to which the door of the Continent was now wide open. The poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries did not hesitate to introduce French words whenever they pleased; and the exigencies of end-rhyme enriched the language. Latin and French, furthermore, combined to influence English to use the stanza, in which end-rhyme was at once servant and master.

*Piers the Plowman* has almost every merit properly to be demanded of a folk-poem: originality, sincerity, simplicity, interestingness; and the alliteration, being in full possession of the field, never seems forced or unwelcome. Its double lines, like those of Anglo-Saxon, sometimes have four stresses, sometimes three. The freedom of the verse is helped by the survival of

107–9, for his laudation of "the most charming of all the religious poems of this time," "a sort of carillon — not indeed of joyful but of melancholy sweetness — a tangle, yet in no disorder, of symphonic sound, running and interlacing itself with an ineffable deliciousness," etc.

many feminine endings; so that the very thing which aided Chaucer in his couplets was of service to Langland in the older measure. Couplets do not appear in *Piers Plowman*, even by accident; the author seems intentionally to have avoided them. The fatal fault of alliteration — the sacrifice of sense to sound — he reduces to a minimum by his very simplicity. Whether or not, as some suppose, there was in existence in his England a considerable body of popular alliterative verse, now lost, he constantly writes as one in easy possession of his instrument and his hearers. If his was the swan-song, we may be thankful that it was so strong and full. Langland was loyal to his method, and he avoided the mongrel notes of *The Pearl* and other exercises in compound rhyming. In him we have right words in right places; not sounds summoned to match other sounds. If he lacks the variety of the newly found stanza, he also avoids its monotony; for the stanza is sometimes a woeful drag on progress. Had other north of England or Scottish poets shared Langland's genius, alliteration might have held the field a little longer; its ultimate disuse as the main rhyme-mark, in the development of English as related to other European tongues, was inevitable. No public of intelligence could long endure such stuff as Gavin Douglas'

"Of dreflyng and dremis quhat dow is it to endyt?  
 For as I lenyt in a ley in Lent this last nycht,  
 I slaid on a swevynnyng slummerand a lite:  
 And sone a selcouth sege I saw to my sycht,  
 Swownand as he suelt wald, soupit in site —  
 Was nevir wrocht in this warld mayr wofull a wycht,  
 Ramand, ressoun and rycht is rent by falss rite,  
 Frenschip flemyt is in France, and fayth hes the flycht,  
 Leis, lurdanry, and lust ar our laid-stern;  
     Pece is put out of play,  
     Welth and weifare away,  
     Lufe and lawte bayth tuay,  
     Lurkis full dern."

Not even Langland could save alliteration by such fine lines as those constituting the famous beginning of his poem:

"In a somer sesun: when softe was the sonne,  
 I schop me into a schroud: a scheep as I were;  
 In habite of an hermite: unholy of werkes,  
 Wende I wydene in this world: wondres to here."

Bote in a Mayes morwyng: on Malverne hulles  
 Me bifel a ferly: a feyrie, me thouhte;  
 I was weori of wandringe: and wente me to reste }  
 Undur a brod banke: by a bourne syde,  
 And as I lay and leonede: and lokede on the watres,  
 I slumberde in a slepyng: hit sownede so murie."

With the passing of Langland and his school, and with the coming of Chaucer, there arises the still vexed question of the terminology of English scansion. As one approaches it, he finds not a debatable land, but confusion worse confounded. So many authorities, so many systems. There are no feet in English, say some. Doctors disagree instantly in marking any consecutive four lines in our verse. One uses the entire scheme of classical prosody; another rejects it. The dactylic movement may as well be called anapæstic, if you get to counting it that way, just as the sound of a railway train is either *one two three one two three*, or *one two three one two three*, as you begin. English entirely lacks quantity, aver some confident prosodists; but on the other hand the learned A. J. Ellis, the investigator of early English pronunciation, gravely sets down nine varieties of stress, nine degrees of length, nine of pitch, and nine of silence. This leads the equally learned J. B. Mayor to say that "life is not long enough to admit of characterizing lines when there are forty-five expressions for each syllable to be considered."

Nearly the whole truth is packed into these admirable words by Mr. Stedman, who had an advantage not possessed by most of those who have written on poetics — that of being a poet: "English verse is characteristically accentuate instead of being quantitative — the reverse being true of classical. . . . Although it is often the more melodious when the more quantitative, its quantity is incidental and derived from the gift of the poets; while stress of accent, as differing from syllabic length, determines its metrical system."

In other words, stress, not quantity, is the basis of English verse; foot, line, and rhyme must follow it. Time, quantity, stress, accent, beat, all plainly exist in English poetry, and coincide more than half of the time — enough to give the law and make anything else the exception. The first line of Gray's *Elegy* is sufficient to show this. We do not, and cannot, say

"Thé curféw tolls thé knell óf partíng day." Hence, for convenience, we may as well use a few accepted names of feet, — spondee, iambus, anapæst, trochee, dactyl. The foot has been well defined as "a group of times which by repetition, with or without variation, characterizes and measures a longer series." But we must always remember that the trained ear, not rule, is the final authority; we must proceed inductively, not deductively. The law must follow the product, not the product the law. The poet does not begin by thinking of feet. Taste, the cultivated "I think so," governs both metre and rhyme, in this English of ours. Let the "thousand warring sects" of the scansion-mongers have their way, with their devices for recording questionable sounds; but do not forget that English, in all its splendid freedom, bears within it poetical powers as great and as varied — though not the same — as those of any other language in which man ever sang. Still, it is chiefly the iambus and the anapæst, not the trochee and the dactyl,—the "ascending," not the "descending," rhythm — that swing the lilt of our song. Swinburne says that English is "a language to which all variations and combinations of anapæstic, iambic, or trochaic [doubtless he includes the trochaic as an occasional substitute] metre are as natural and pliable as all dactylic and spondaic forms of verse are unnatural and abhorrent." We cannot admit that the dactylic and spondaic movements are "unnatural and abhorrent"; but must recognize that they play but a subordinate or occasional part in English verse.

In form as in spirit, in rhyme as in poetic creation, Chaucer was the true leader of our song. His follower Occleve declared him to be "the first fynder of our faire langage," while a recent writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* claims that he "created the noble instrument of speech which can hardly be matched save in ancient Greece." As we have seen, rhyme, and end-rhyme, were no invention of Chaucer's; but no Englishman before him had rhymed so fluently, so variedly, so effectively; and in no subsequent English poet is there a smaller proportion of imperfect or objectionable rhymes. He saw that the iambic pentameter was the indispensable measure in English verse; by none of his successors has it been better applied to narration and description;



with French models, he was the shaper of the English stanza; and in his splendid originality he made us forget his predecessors and his contemporaries.

Perhaps the first thing to attract the attention of students of Chaucer's rhymes is the fact that in his practice, as in Dante's (e. g., *Paradiso*, XIII, 89, 91) identical sounds of different meanings form permissible rhymes, as in *lye* (rest): *lye* (falsify); *seke* (seek): *seke* (sick). In *Troilus and Cressida*, V, 104-5, are *mene* (noun) and *mene* (verb); while in *The Book of the Duchesse*, 171-2, are *song* (song): *song* (singing).

Rhymes like the following abound in Chaucer (the final syllable of course being stressed):

"That speses of thynges and progressiouns [-ouns]  
Shullen enduren by successiouns" (*Knigh't's Tale*, 3013-4).

So *disposicioun*: *excucioun*; *conclusioun*: *confusioun*; *queyntely*: *jetously*; *pridelees*: *rewthelees*; *giltelees*, etc.

Something of the pun or joke strikes the modern ear in

"Of tymes of hem, ne of the causis  
For-why this is more than that cause is" (*House of Fame*).

and

"If thou noon aske, so soore artow y-woundid  
That verray nede unwrappeth al thy wounde hid"  
(*Man of Laws' Tale*).

Such rhymes as *lyte is*: *dytees*; *vices*: *vyce is* illustrate the indifference to minor variations in vowel sounds which has characterized English poetry from the first, and which prevents nice deductions concerning pronunciation from rhymes in Chaucer or any other of our poets. Endings such as *vileynye*: *cowardye*; *crye*: *envye*, in consecutive lines, are unusual; but in the stanza comprehended in lines 299-307 of *The Complaynte of Faire Anelida and False Arcite* the rhymes, in order, are *womanhede*: *dede*: *nede*: *lede*: *drede*: *bede*: *mede*: *sede*: *hede*.

"For curs wol slee, — right as assoiling savith;  
And also war him of a *Significavit*" (*Prologue*, 661-2).

reminds us that the so-called Roman pronunciation (*v* like *w*) was not in vogue in Chaucer's day.

Chaucer used alliteration as an ornament, not an obligation. End-rhyme was henceforth to be the rule, and everything else an accessory. Now and then he made large use of alliteration, as, for instance, in the *Knight's Tale*, 1747 ff. But to him it was neither a necessity nor an aversion, but a convenience. The famous words of the Parson:

"But trusteth wel, I am a Southren man,  
I can nat geste — rum, ram, ruf — by lettre"

cannot be considered as anything more than a sign that alliteration, the once prevalent rhyme-art, had passed from general to forced use, especially in the north.

By Chaucer, as by Dante, the word "rhyme" was sometimes used as synonymous with verse in general:

"He hath bitrayde folkes many tyme;  
Of his falshede it dulleth me to ryme"  
(*Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, 1092-3).

Chaucer's alleged separation, in his rhyme-groups, of vowels open and close, or long and short, is not worth extended discussion, notwithstanding the deductions of over-confident editors. Authorities — even as painstaking as Skeat and Ten Brink — hopelessly disagree; and we may well be cautious in laying down the law when we remember present-day variations of pronunciation, on the part of persons of culture, of so familiar words as *therefore* and *wherefore*. Our lack of absolute knowledge of the range of sounds given by Chaucer to any vowel is too great to allow dogmatism as to his rhyme-uses. It is not surprising that the latest of Chaucerian critics (R. R. Root, *A Study of Chaucer*, Boston, 1907) concludes that "for practical purposes it may be well to disregard the distinction between the 'open' and 'close' sounds of *e* and *o*." To be sure of Chaucer's rhyming of *e*'s and *o*'s we would need

1. an undoubted text;
2. an invariable pronunciation in his day (Lydgate was apparently a looser rhymer and pronouncer than Chaucer);
3. an unquestionable knowledge of that pronunciation, five hundred years afterward;

4. a certainty that Chaucer intended to bind his rhymes with absolute strictness.

The wonder is that he apparently made so little variation in rhyme-sounds; but let us not be sure of his finer sound-values until we are certain that we could make him understand our own reading of a page of his poems.

When we turn to the larger results of Chaucer's rhyme-art, we find that he, for the first time in English, normally used the five-stressed iambic rhythm, in rhymed form, — blank verse being a later development. Why the iambic pentameter, rhymed or unrhymed, is the great English line is not easily to be explained. But it is of a length sufficient for the expression of a complete thought or considerable element of thought; and it follows the disposition of the language to proceed from an unstressed unimportant sound to a stressed important one. Again, it avoids the sharp caesura in the middle of the line, which is akin to the genius of the French and alien to that of the English. As soon as Chaucer had shown the commanding suitability of this measure, the hexameters of Robert of Gloucester and his successors, down to Longfellow, became mere *tours-de-force*.

Chaucer's use, however, was not limited to the pentameter rhymed couplet. The tetrameter couplet was largely employed by him, for the first time in English, and in *The Complaynte unto Pite* and *Troilus and Cressida* he used the rhyme-royal or seven-line stanza, rhymed *ababbcc*. This, by an easy modification, became the Spenserian stanza, which will be considered in its proper place. In the *A B C* and the *Monk's Tale* is an eight-line stanza: *ababbcbc* — which, again, is the Spenserian save for the ninth alexandrine *c*-line. In the *Complaynte to his Lady* two stanzas are in rhyme-royal, and then Dante's *terza rima* is used (the first of its few and unsuccessful appearances in English verse), followed by a ten-lined stanza: *aabaabddc*. In the *Complaynt in Anelida and Arcite* are varying stanzas with strophe and answering antistrophe. In the ballade form of *Truth, Gentillesse*, and *Lack of Stedfastnesse* the rhymes of the first seven-line stanza are repeated in several stanzas. *Merciles Beauty* is a French triple roundel, and there is a roundel in the *Parlement of Foules*. In some of these are twelve rhyming words, without loss of ease in effect.

Chaucer makes large use of feminine endings, made necessary by the survival of the *e*-termination, which was the remainder of a dozen inflections in Anglo-Saxon. In rounding out his lines, or even his stanzas, he shows easy mastery of the arts of finishing or running-on, as the case demands.

In *Anelida and Arcite* (272-80 and 333-41) are internal rhymes.

"Cadence" in the following (*House of Fame*) is a puzzle to the Chaucerians (for one conjecture see Skeat's edition of the works, III, 257):

"And neverthelesse hast set thy wyt  
(Although that in thy heed ful lyte is)  
To make bookes, songes, or dytees  
In ryme or elles in cadence."

Tone-color, that elusive thing, midway between the highest æsthetic fact and the merest imaginative self-deception, beautifully appears in the "O Alma Redemptoris" passages of *The Prioress' Tale*, in the key-phrase of which Chaucer introduced the two most melodious of vowel-sounds, *o* and *a*.

Finally, this master of heroic couplet, octosyllabic couplet, stanza, and

"many an ympne for your halydayes,  
That lighten Balades, Roundels, Virelayes"  
(*Legend of Good Women*, 422-3).

illustrates his facile knowledge of all the prosody of his day by the jocose *Rime of Sir Thopas*, so swiftly interrupted by the gentle penalty of the poet's prose:

"Here the Hoost stynteth Chaucer of his Tale of Thopas:

"Na moore of this, for Goddes dignitee!  
Quod oure Hoste, 'for thou makest me  
So wery of thy verray lewednesse  
That, also wisly God my soule blesse,  
Min eres aken of thy drasty speche.  
Now swich a rym the devel I biteche!  
This may wel be rym dogerel,' quod he.  
'Why so,' quod I; 'why wiltow lette me  
Moore of my tale than another man,  
Syn that it is the beste ryme I kan?'  
'By God,' quod he, 'for pleynly, at a word,  
Thy drasty ryming is not worth a toord;



Thou doest noght elles but despendest tyme;  
 Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme.  
 Lat se wher thou kanst tellen aught in geeste,  
 Or telle in prose somewhat, at the leeste,  
 In which ther be som murthe, or som doctryne.”

No pioneer poet of any language can show in his verse-forms such a variety of commanding and influential achievements. It is, accordingly, amusing to remember that the late Professor Earle, on the basis of the well-known lines in the *Compleynte of Venus* (which is in three ballades, with one envoy) —

“And eek to me hit is a greet penaunce,  
 Sith rym in English hath swich scarsitee,  
 To folowe word by word the curiositee  
 Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in France” —

gravely assured us that “Chaucer felt the difficulty of rhyming in English; he could not keep pace with the French rhymers.” Chaucer really left the English rhyme-art, in all of its essentials, in no need of improvement.

After Chaucer, not the deluge, but dwindling rills. Gower used the octosyllabic couplet with fluency, though not always with poetic beauty. His *Confessio Amantis* is as dull and wordy as the *Ormulum*, without Orm’s excuse of pioneer toils, and without the naïveté which gives the *Ormulum* a certain charm. Saintsbury thinks that Gower’s octosyllables were written *con amore*, while Chaucer’s were written against the grain; he adds the conjecture that Gower’s tetrameter form probably influenced Wither, possibly Keats, and certainly William Morris, “the actual author of the greatest examples of it in English, taking bulk and merit together.” If anybody is inclined to think that Keats was influenced by Gower, let him turn from Gower to *The Eve of St. Mark*.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, a curiously Morris-like swing in the quotation from Gower’s Medea story, cited by Saintsbury (*History of English Prosody*, 141).

<sup>1</sup> There seems to be something unlucky in comments on this metre, Mr. R. L. Alden, in his *English Verse*, says that “in modern English poetry this short couplet has rarely been used for continuous narrative of a serious character, except by Byron and Wordsworth,” a remark which shows how easily one forgets the most obvious things of all, such as *Marmion*, *The Lady of the Lake*, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and *Snow-Bound*.

To Puttenham (1589) Gower was especially odious; Puttenham goes so far as to call him a bungler and not a poet, and to say that "to make up his rhyme" he "would for the most part write his terminant syllable with false orthography," which is, of course, a great exaggeration.

Gower, like Chaucer, rhymes indentical sounds with different meanings: *laste* (endure): *laste* (end); *ungood*: *good*.

In the fifteenth century spelling and pronunciation were in so changeable a state that poets were both advantaged and disadvantaged by the consequent freedom given them. In Skelton one finds at times a rudeness of rhymes almost as wayward as that in the anonymous ballads of his century, and amounting to little more than haphazard assonance, — for example, *gentle*: *mantle*; *nept*: *set*: *violet*; *health*: *wealth*: *himself*; *jug*: *luck*: *chuck*. Skelton put on record the fact that he did not care whether his

"rime be ragged,  
Tattered and jagged,  
Rudely raine-beaten,  
Rusty and moth-eaten,"

so long as people understood and liked it; and his rapidly running verse bears out his easy theory. But his "voluble breathless doggerel," as John Churton Collins calls it, was meant, in part, to be dramatic, as put into the mouths of the common folk. At its worst it is dull and clumsy; at its best it shows the variety and force of an experimenter seeking greater freedom in number of accents, in internal rhymes, in the number of lines ending with the same rhyme, and in novel words. Skelton was a rude anticipator of Butler, Barham, and Mahony.

In the ballads of the fifteenth and following centuries, as in the popular sentimental songs and music-hall jingles of our own day, no nicety of rhyme was asked or given; it was enough that the ear be caught by any recurrent similarity. In *Barbara Allen* we have the assonantal *dwellin'*: *Allen* (compare Scott's *Helvellyn*: *yelling* and Wordsworth's *sullen*: *pulling*); in *Fair Helen green*: *e'en*: *tying*; in *Sir Patrick Spens deep*: *feet*; *mourn*: *storm*; in *The Dragon of Wantley warrant ye*: *Wantley*; and so on, indefinitely. In the gem of all the English ballads, *A Lyke*

*Wake Dirge*, the beauty of thought and word is such that even the modern reader does not stop to notice the rhyme *passe: last*. Everything was subordinated to the prime requisite of a lyric: the effective expression of feeling; and so it made no difference whether there were the prodigality of internal rhyme, or scarcely any good rhyme at all; or what number of syllables occurred in the line, so long as the number of beats was usually preserved. Coleridge's insistence that the line should be measured by its stresses, not its syllables, was anticipated in the old English ballads over and over again. So, too, was the "common metre" of the later hymn-writers; virtually a seven-stressed iambic line, indifferently with or without rhymes at the fourth stresses. It was not strange that the ballads, when repopularized by Percy and Scott, were the very groundwork of the Romantic revival in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The great charm of the ballads is the charm of all romantic poetry in English, when at its best: the combination of unity with variety, of fixity with freedom, in which English verse is supreme in all literature.

The refrains of the ballads are sometimes bound to the stanzas by rhyme, but usually, and preferably, not; for the refrain, like Hebrew parallelism, is in itself an idea-rhyme.

Perhaps the worst constructive fault chargeable against the ballads is an occasional excessive use of internal rhyme, which so easily degenerates into doggerel, as in the later American religious "classic" of the seventeenth century: Michael Wigglesworth's *Day of Doom*. Internal rhyme, when freely used, demands the genius of a Coleridge or a Poe to make it endurable. And Coleridge and Poe, unlike the authors of the *Nutbrowne Maide* and the *Day of Doom*, knew enough to vary it. All iterations, too near together, become wearisome after a little, like Gawain Douglas' "Vertew, quhais trew sweit dew ourithrew al vice" or Swinburne's "sad bad mad glad" Villon. Tricks should be concealed, not magnified.

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the modernness of old folk-poetry is startling, as in the beautiful swing of a stanza from the part of Eve in a Coventry play:

"Alas that ever that speech was spoken  
That the false angel said unto me;  
Alas, our Maker's bidding is broken,  
For I have touched his own dear tree."

## VII

### THE ELIZABETHANS AND THE RHYME CONTROVERSY

EVERY reader of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* has recognized, a hundred times, the appropriateness of giving the first page to Thomas Nash's poem on Spring. In its artless spontaneity it suggests the first song-sparrows, twittering on the trees before the snow has melted beneath. The general scansion of most of the lines, if you must hunt it out, is the familiar iambic pentameter; but the start is a trochee, and the voice falls, here and there, into three strong stresses in each half-line, the caesura emphasized by the prodigal internal-rhymes. It is the very expression of that license in law of which each springtide reminds us anew:

"Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king;  
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,  
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

Free as the poem is, the mono-rhymes are perfect, according to the modern standard, with the exception of *meet: sit*. Nash's contemporaries, however, suggest an earlier method. In Wyatt we have *cruelty: liberty: extremity; washeth: departeth: perceiveth: plaineth: fleeth: appeareth: feareth; reason: season: condition: fashion; forgetfulness: cruelty: readiness: fearfulness* (in every case the accent on the last syllable). If Wyatt and Surrey had had their way, the eye would have had as much to do with rhyme as the ear. Some of Wyatt's lines seem to the modern reader almost unscannable. Here, for instance, is a part of his translation of Petrarch's sixty-first sonnet:

"I will not in my gráve be búriéd,  
Nor ón my tómb your náme have fíxed fást,  
As crúel cáuse that díd the spírit soon háste  
From th' únhappy bones, bý great síghs stírréd."



If anybody is dissatisfied with this scansion, let him make his own. Intelligibility is barely saved, but beauty is lost.

Wyatt at his best, though no Surrey, was a poet; but when to Italianization of thought he added every kind of violation of rhyme-accent, the result is not "precious." *Also: grow; comfort: sort;* are natural enough; *sum: doom; leche: wretch; alas: space; last: waste;* and even *streams: Thames: dreams;* are to be explained by the pronunciation of his time; but in *harbóur: bannér;* or *suffér: displeasúre,* as well as in some of those already quoted, it is easy to see that to the lingering utterance of the time Wyatt undertook to add the idea that the rhymers were privileged to make pronunciation, so long as the lines contained the requisite number of syllables. Fortunately, as he wrote at the beginning of a great period, this method did not approve itself to other poets. Perhaps his most astonishing rhyme is *contrary-ing: countre-weighing.* Once, in a sonnet, he gives the unexpected assonance *yfiled: beguiled: smiled: misguided.*

Wyatt experimented with the *terza rima*, and, as usual in English, without success. The metre, in our ears, has no unifying effect; the reader or hearer goes doubtfully along, uncertain where the rhymes fall, and whether he is given ordinary alternate rhymes or not. Much more important was Wyatt's service in introducing into English the Italian sonnet and *ottava rima* (*abababcc*), in the latter of which he was pleasantly successful. Later poets, however, found the metre less capable of inclusiveness and of variation than the similar Spenserian stanza, and it never was widely used. His sonnets, marred by the artificial syllable-counting and wrenched accents just mentioned, are heavy reading, and much inferior to Surrey's. An original experiment of Wyatt's was what Saintsbury calls "intertwisted decasyllables" (*ababcbcdcdede*, etc.), which, as the same authority says, "has more the effect of blank verse than of any rhyme whatever." The English ear cannot, or will not, carry changing rhymes very far. With the exception of the octave of the sonnet, and the *In Memoriam* metre, we decline, as a rule, any greater separation or longer continuance than alternate rhymes.

Another metre of Wyatt's was the "poulter's measure" (alternate iambic hexameter and iambic heptameter) rhymed *aabb*,

etc. The name was given it by Gascoigne, on the ground that it proffered twelve for one dozen and fourteen for another. He calls it, exaggeratingly, the "commonest sort of verse which we use nowadays"; but at least it was not unfamiliar to the minor versifiers of the time. Just why it pleased the popular ear for a while is hard to discover, for it made a rule out of what was an exception in Middle English ballad-chronicles, and seems to belong to crude rather than Italianized days.

It is glory enough for Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey — the greatest poet from Chaucer's day to his own, to say that he was the pioneer, and a successful one, in the use of blank verse in English. The investigation of this great form — from Surrey to "Marlowe's mighty line," and from Marlowe to Tennyson's *Idyls of the King* — does not belong here. It is enough to say that Surrey's translation of the second and fourth books of the *Aeneid* is a landmark in the history of English poetry.

The Italians were at that time beginning their movement to remand rhyme into the suburbs of their good pleasure, as a modern and rather discreditable thing, in comparison with unrhymed quantitative verse after the classical Latin model. Hence the unrhymed *Italia Liberata* of Trissino, etc, in *versi sciolti* (freed from end-rhyme and depending on scansion); and hence, as we shall see presently, the great onslaught on rhyme by a very active school of English poets, poetasters, and critics. Just how far Surrey, a constant student of Italian models, was influenced by them in his use of blank verse is difficult to say; but so sonorous and majestic a vehicle for poetic thought — dramatic, philosophical, and even narrative — was bound to come. It is at any rate improbable that Marlowe, though a translator from the Latin, was influenced by the anti-rhymers.

Surrey, like Wyatt, sometimes counted syllables to fill the verse, and threw forced accents on syllables unable to bear it; but in both faults he was a less sinner than Wyatt. He did not rhyme *-eth:-eth,-ing:-ing*, or *-on:-on*. Y (indifferent with *i* or *e*) rhymes of course occur in him, and have come down through the centuries. A few of his more unusual rhymes are *wolf: gulph; rest: beast; assays: ease; face: alas* — the two last words undoubtedly representing the same pronunciation in his day.

The gem in Surrey's rich, if small, volume is the famous alliterative sonnet on Spring, in which the lingering utterance belonging to most descriptive and meditative verse makes enjoyable even the unusual accent of his day and school:

"The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,  
 With green hath clad the hill and eke the vale:  
 The nightingale with feathers new she sings;  
 The turtle to her mate hath told her tale.  
 Summer is come, for every spray now springs:  
 The hart hath hung his old head on the pale;  
 The buck in brake his winter coat he flings;  
 The fishes flete with new repaired scale.  
 The adder all her slough away she slings;  
 The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale;  
 The busy bee her honey now she mings;  
 Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale.  
 And thus I see among these pleasant things  
 Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs."

At this period of almost universal curiosity, novelties in verse were appearing on every hand: now imported from Italy, and now invented — like Nash's pretty poem — by the very prodigality of freshly-singing genius. Thus we have Turberville writing eighteen-line stanzas, partly in dimeters, and with *pleasure: treasure: leisure: measure*-rhymes that seem a century away from Wyatt's heavy endings. Turberville also had the originality to rhyme *aaaxbbbx*, the intentional abandonment of rhyme making a good because unexpected finish, especially as coming at the end of the shorter lines.

Spenser, the "poet's poet," the creator of what Taine calls a "phantasmagoria," was a master-rhymer in two ways: the mellifluous felicity of his rhymes themselves, and the skill with which they were made the means of binding verses together in beautifully unified stanzas, of which the "Spenserian," — that fine expansion of the rhyme royal and the *ottava rima*, is of course the chief. It is out of fashion now, but as long as English poetry is read it will hold its place, not only in Spenser himself but also in Thomson and now and then in Byron. Its other users failed fully to catch its art. I will not enrich these pages with needless specimens; turn to your Spenser, take the *Faerie Queene* to the brookside, and sit down and yield to the charm of the musical steady flow.

Spenser knew the rhyme-advantage of a long and sometimes variant burden, as in the "That all the woods may answer, and your echo ring" of the *Epithalamion*, or the "Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song" of the *Prothalamion*. His sonnets, in two forms, are inferior to many produced by his contemporaries, even by men of an ability much inferior to his own. As good as any is "One day I wrote her name upon the strand" (in *ababbcbccdcdee* form). This interlacing destroys both the Italian and the Shakespearean schemes; but Spenser, who invented it, sometimes so uses it as to preserve the sonnet-unity in a nice way.

It seems almost inexplicable that this master of rhyme should have joined, though not very effectively, in the Elizabethan attack on the art; and that the creator of what has been called the most perfect of all stanzas should have turned out unrhymed alleged hexameters that would discredit a fairly bright schoolboy to-day.

Regarding the externalities of rhyme, he employed, but not often, feminine endings, and sometimes forced the final accent so that it fell upon this or that syllable of the closing word; but this license is far less common than in Wyatt, or even in Surrey. Of identical rhymes one finds *stor'd: stor'd: restor'd; play* (verb): *play* (noun); *night: knight; ornament: monument*. At one extreme we have *girlánd: ribánd*; and at the other *perféction: inféction* (at the ends of pentameters). The following illustrate differences in pronunciation between his day and ours:—*gras: was; cast: plast* (placed); *heate: threate; envy: spy; wars: years*. But in the following the pronunciation is sundered: *mourne: learne; cherisht: florisht*. Spenser sometimes resorted to dialectal forms for rhyme-exactness; e. g., *swim: clim* (climb); *jawes: wawes* (waves); *grieffe: clieffe*. Assonance is found in *deckt: set; straine: became; shepherd: bettered*.

The remark is not exactly germane to the present discussion; but I cannot dismiss Spenser without reminding the reader that the author of the greatest English narrative poem after Chaucer could not scan the *Canterbury Tales*, but entirely missed the measure, trying to make the *Prologue* go in four feet because he did not understand the final *e*.

Examples of rhyme-freedom abound in the poets of the period. Drummond has *prescrib'd: depriv'd*. The anonymous Elizabethan



lyrics are almost as wayward — and for the same reason — as the ballads of the previous century. In them we find *bitter: sweeter; else: excels; there: sphere; surpass: was; remorse: force; fast: waste; have: save; do: so; dainty: beauty; meadows: willows; do you: wi' you*. Some of these are once-current pronunciations; some are permissible stretchings of vowels; some are assonances. Sidney's *one: groan* was current vowel-use; but his *peace: release: press: cease* shows that he, like almost all English poets who have ever written, was willing to force the sound under the necessities of multiplying rhymes. He gives *love: prove*, as Marlowe *love: move*. *Love*, in the sixteenth century, was probably *luv*; but whatever its pronunciation at any time, the poets have been compelled to treat it liberally, on account of its necessity as an expression, and its few rhyming companions, on any theory of utterance.

Herrick, who was virtually an Elizabethan, though he wrote in the seventeenth century, was generally as accurate as any modern rhymers, though of course some of his old pronunciations make readers pause. His *come: home* appears in Scott, Moore, and Emerson, — *home* being almost in the position of *love*, as regards its rhyming necessities. Pope, it may be remarked by the way, has *dome: come*; and Dryden *home: plum* and *home: comb: gum*. *Lark: clerk*, in Herrick, survives in England but not in the United States. No theory really justifies his

"Some ask'd me where the rubies grew;  
And nothing did I say,  
But with my finger pointed to  
The lips of Julia."

A chapter might be given to Herrick as true poet and facile rhymester. I will only quote a stanza from his clever iambic monometer *Upon his Departure Hence*:

"Thus I  
Pass by  
And die  
As one  
Unknown  
And gone."

Crashaw and Cowley, too, seem to belong with the Elizabethan choir. In the *Wishes for the Supposed Mistress* of the former we

have great freedom — *lie: eye: destiny; birth: forth: earth; wishes: blisses: kisses; beauty: duty: shoe-tie; up: shop: ope; here: clear: character; this is: wishes: kisses; glory: before ye: story.* Here, as so often, jocosity leads to rhyme-freedom. In his pronunciation survived the sixteenth-century perfect rhyme *now: you.*

Cowley has *envy'd: side; one: legion* (ōn in both words); *sought: vault* and *sought: fault* (old dropping of the *l* sound); *come: home* (see above); *heat: great; yet: bit.* His *tell: unspeakable* suggests the nineteenth-century pre-Raphaelites, or Whittier's "Pisa's leaning miracle," rhyming with *tell.*

In Crashaw's *know: no* we have a late survivor of the old custom, so often mentioned.

Herbert has one poem (*Easter Wings*) in the shape of alleged wings, and another (*The Altar*) in the form of a table with central pillar, supporting a *mensa*. On the whole, his verse-tricks, among which appears an anagram in shocking taste, seriously impair the pleasure taken by the modern reader in the work of one who, in occasional thought and phrase, was certainly a true poet. Herbert makes frequent use of short rhyming lines, and in one case (*Heaven*) he employs the echo device:

"Oh who will show me those delights on high?

*Echo:* I," etc.

In *Paradise* the rhymes of the successive stanzas drop a letter after the first line: *Grow: row: ow; charm: harm: arm; start: tart: art; spare: pare: are; friend: rend: end.* *Thrown: stone: one*, in the *Sepulchre* poem, proves the long *o* pronunciation of *one* in Herbert's day. *Venture: centre* indicates the contemporary sound of the former word. In the *Jesu* poem, in which, according to the whimsical fashion of the time, the title-word is resolved into "I ease you," the characters *I* and *J* are used interchangeably, as is shown by the rhyme *J: instantly.*

A curiosity in Herbert — unmatched elsewhere, as far as I know — is the significance given to a rhyme-word by its deliberate transference from its proper place (in the last stanza of *Home*):

"Come, dearest Lord, pass not this holy season,  
 My flesh and bones and joints do pray:  
 And even my verse, when by the rhyme and reason  
 The word is Stay, says ever, Come.  
 Oh show thyself to me,  
 Or take me up to thee!"

The Elizabethan lyrists so used end-rhyme as to give, in a great variety of forms, a combined pleasure, as of the best Italian art and the truest English freedom. The range is long and the achievement high. To the general division belong masterpieces as far apart as Shakespeare's "Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth" — the highest personal expression he ever gave the world; his tripping three-stressed "Crabbed age and youth"; his tender "Fear no more the heat o'the sun"; Lodge's Shelleyan "Like to the clear in highest sphere"; Constable's "Diaphenia like the daffadowndilly," where the syllables scamper to catch the metre, in the very sport of joyousness; Wyatt's best poem, "Forget not yet the tried intent," with its simply effective refrain; Barnefield's "As it fell upon a day"; and the stately eighteen-line groups, half stanza, half strophe, of the *Prothalamion*.

In regard to the rhymes of Shakespeare, an interesting and patient study of the subject has been made by the German phonologist Wilhelm Viëtor, with the intention of determining the pronunciation of the poet. He has classified, by evident or supposed sounds, all the rhymes in the poems, and has prefixed to his phonetic dictionary thereof an elaborate discussion of the questions involved, with many allusions to rhymes in the plays.

Here, as in all delicate questions of pronunciation from Chaucer's day to ours, uncertainties confront one at every step. Viëtor's own ear, as shown by his phonetic devices and tables of sounds, does not invariably seem, to the English student, sufficiently trustworthy to enable him to determine close differences which to many appear imperceptible or imaginary. "What," indignantly exclaimed a Scotch divine transferred to a New York pulpit, — when his more Americanized daughter was endeavoring to correct his dialectal pronunciation of the word in question, — "what is the *difference*, anyway, between *difference* and *difference*?"

Most of Viëtor's suggestions do not affect the essential quality

of the rhyme at all; and his nice arrangements of closely pairing sounds, though some of them are unquestionable, are offset in Shakespeare, as in nearly every English poet, by other rhymes in which he evidently cared for nothing save a general similarity. The book, however, is a valuable finding-list, and must gratefully be accepted as a body of salient suggestions. To it the interested student may turn for himself; only a few points can be considered here.

Viëtor deems significant the rhyming, by themselves, of *aim*, *exclaim*, *maim*, as over against the separate group of *blame*, *came*, *dame*, *defame*, *fame*, *frame*, *inflammé*, *lame*, *name*, *same*, *shame*, and *tame*. That is, he thinks that Shakespeare differentiated between modern simple long *a* in *blame* and a semi-diphthongal *ai* in *aim* ("a in *can* followed by *e* in *be*") — as also in *aid*, etc. But the New English Dictionary gives *ēi* for both *blame* and *aim*; the list of *aim*-rhymes is too short to prove much; and we have *dame*: *remain* in *The Passionate Pilgrim*. Such uncertainties in the crucial points of Viëtor's arguments — even in the poems, more accurately rhymed than the rhyming lines in the plays — tend to throw us back upon A. J. Ellis's conclusion that Shakespeare's puns and rhymes illustrate nothing save his general way of speech, and cannot enable us to reconstruct a system of Elizabethan phonetics. One or two such rhymes as *wretch*: *scratch* or *neck*: *back* (*Venus and Adonis*) offset a hundred alleged niceties elsewhere.

*Lined*: *mind*: *wind*: *Rosalind*, in *As You Like It*, are made *ī* by Viëtor and *ei* by Sweet and Ellis; but in *Love's Labor's Lost* we have *Longaville*: *compile* and *Longaville*: *ill*, indifferently. So long as the letter is the same or the sound somewhat similar, Shakespeare cares little for the second rhyming word; thus we have *quickly*: *unlikely*; *enrich'd*: *beseech'd*; *shift*: *theft*; *wit*: *yet*; *imprinted*: *contented*; *spirit*: *merit*; *commission*: *impression*. Such cases as these Viëtor frankly recognizes as not being close rhymes; indeed, he once states that his general contention is only that Shakespeare used a greater number of "perfect" rhymes than is generally supposed. The percentage of perfect rhymes in Shakespeare is smaller than in Chaucer, but larger than in such a modern romantic poet as Keats.



Shakespeare's *groin*: *swine* suggests the universal eighteenth-century pronunciation of *join*, *toil*, etc., as əi. Probably Shakespeare's *joined*: *coined*; *boil*: *spoil* and *foiled*: *toiled* were also əi.

On the old monosyllabic-dissyllabic *fire*: *higher* question, Shakespeare throws no light save in the rhymes *relier*: *desire*; *relier*: *retire*.

*Are*: *care* and *were*: *appear* remind us that *er* and *wir* are probable Shakespearean pronunciations. *A* and *e*, in a long list of similar words, have always been in an uncertain state. The same remark may be made of *granting*: *wanting*. *Wanting* (a) is probably Shakespearean; but, on the other hand, a recent American phonetician gives ɔ̄ for *grant* as the present normal pronunciation. Rhyme, after all, goes but a short and uncertain way as a guide to pronunciation. *Been*: *seen* (ī) and *rather*: *father* (a) are heard in twentieth-century England; while in the United States one hears *been*: *sin* (i) and *rather*: *gather* (æ). Thomas Lovell Beddoes, in one of his letters, says that "the best use of rhyme is that it teaches pronunciation"; but if no half-dozen people, even in the same environment, may be trusted to pronounce *literature*, *news*, *girl*, *water*, in precisely the same way, how can we dogmatize when we undertake to settle, by their rhymes, the pronunciation of Chaucer and Shakespeare? When intentional variability, which we have found from the first use of end-rhyme, is added to this difficulty of establishing even contemporary speech on any basis of phonetic unity, it behooves us to be modest.

The *l* in *balk* had perhaps disappeared in Shakespeare's day, and he rhymes *balk*: *hawk*. But he also has the surprising assonantal rhyme *talk*: *halt*.

*Leap*: *reap* appears but once in the poems, and *leaps*: *steps* once; in *Merry Wives* is *leap*: *unswept* — suggestive of the modern dialectal preterite *swep* ("he swep the crossink" — Thackeray's *Yellowplush*). *Dread*: *bed* and *dreadeth*: *leadeth* also illustrate Shakespeare's constant indifference in the use of *ea* and *e*. *Great* rhymes with *defeat* and *get*, and *greater* with *better*. *Eats*: *gets* reverses the tense of Milton's *feat*: *eat* (preterite); but the pronunciation and orthography of *eat*, in the present and past

tenses, have been shaky for three centuries. *Defeated: created*, as Viëtor says, "looks like an eye-rhyme."

Interesting, in one way or another, are *publisher: singular: orator; enter: venture; departure: shorter; heard: regard; art: convert; read* (present tense): *indeed*, and also *o'er-read: (present) dead; again: brain*, and also *again: pen; grapes: mishaps; water: flatter; dally: jolly; moan: upon; noon: son; adder: shudder*.

Shakespeare pronounced *o* in almost any way: *e. g., roaming: coming; no man: woman; Rome: room; Jove: love; man: one; one: shoon; noon: son; store: poor; propose: lose; sycamore: hour*. Still greater indifference is shown by *daughter: slaughter* and *daughter: after*, while elsewhere are *caught her: slaughter: halter*.

Finally, of queer rhymes, sometimes mere assonance, we have *blemish: replenish; remember'd: tender'd; empty: plenty; be-time: Valentine; him: win; dooms: moons; come: sung; open: broken; teeth: with*; and the astonishing *only in: of good women*, which has caused the commentators to sit up o' nights.

Shakespeare, in general, observed the usual prosodic and melodic laws of his day. He was at the farthest remove from deserving the remark of a recent critic that "Shakespeare, that royal libertine, could not be expected to reverence the laws." Save as he treated English rhyme as a free, not a fettered, thing he was orderly throughout. To his rhymes he gave full value. Even in his eccentricities he was not the most wayward of the Elizabethans. Alliteration is moderately used; he knew the unwisdom, in an age devoted to end-rhyme, of carrying "raging rocks and shivering shocks" too far. Thought-rhyme and tone color appear everywhere, as needed.

The fact that rhymes and "end-stopped" lines occur much more frequently in the earlier plays than in the later is too well known to need amplification, even in a study of English rhyme. In *Love's Labor's Lost* there are two rhymed lines to one of blank verse. In *The Comedy of Errors* there are 380 rhymed lines and 1150 unrhymed; in *The Tempest* only two rhymed lines; in *A Winter's Tale* none (Dowden). The same student reminds us that *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, III, i, 169-77, is all rhyme

(it is monorhyme); that *Richard III* was, more than any other of the plays, "under the influence of the great master of blank verse, Marlowe"; that "in so late a play as *Othello* Shakespeare introduces rhyme to fulfil a special purpose when he sees fit" (*e. g.*, I, iii, 201-19; II, i, 141-69); that "in *All's Well* rhyme is employed as a vehicle for generalizing reflections"; and that blank verse, run-on lines, and light endings increased as Shakespeare gained in mastery.

In the plays rhyme is used to mark ends of scenes, or "asides," to be noticed by the audience. E. A. Abbott (*Shakespearean Grammar*) says that Shakespeare uses prose for comic scenes, letters, etc., "where it is desirable to lower the dramatic pitch"; for colloquial parts; for frenzy (*Othello*, IV, i, 34-44); for madness (*Lear*, IV, vi, 130); and for "the higher flights of the imagination" (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 310-20).

Sometimes Homer nods, and sometimes Shakespeare writes the poorest of prose in rhymed form, *e. g.*:

"Do not say so, Lysander, say not so,  
What though he love thy Hermia? Lord, what though?"

A curious variation for the sake of the rhyme is to be found in the well-known song in *Much Ado*, where (First Folio) one stanza begins "Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no *more*," rhyming with *shore*; and the next "Sing no more ditties, sing no *mo*," rhyming with *so*.

The Shakespearean sonnet (*abab cdcd efef gg*) is undoubtedly inferior to the Italian in form, and is really three four-line stanzas and a two-line coda. But Shakespeare made it the vehicle of some of the noblest and most beautiful of his thoughts; he never wrote anything greater than Sonnet CXLVI. Sonnet XCIX has fifteen lines, rhyming *abab cdcd efef gg*; and CXXVI twelve, rhyming *aabb ccdd eeff* — really not a sonnet at all, but six heroic couplets. Sonnet XX is in feminine rhymes alone, — a device successful here, by intention, but one which the author did not repeat. In general, Shakespeare's success in giving a true sonnet-effect, while discarding the Italian plan of making a statement in the octet and an application in the sextet, is a constant surprise, coming as it did, at a time when Italian influences were para-

mount. A certain similarity — of application or climax — may naturally be found between the closing couplets of the sonnets and those of Shakespeare's six-line stanzas (*ababcc*) in *Venus and Adonis*, or the rhyme royal (*ababbcc*) of *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Shakespeare's rhymes fairly cover those of his contemporaries, which need not here be discussed *in extenso*. As regards rhyme, there was a large similarity among the Elizabethan writers, looking back, as they did, to Chaucer and forward to Dryden. Italian influences, and necessary lyrical freedom, affected verse-forms rather than rhyming uses. Marlowe's

"By shallow rivers, to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals,"

or his

"The shepherd swains shall dance and sing  
For thy delight, each May morning,"

would not have been foreign to Keats or Shelley; while the correct but rather wooden heroic couplets of his *Hero and Leander* did not differ from eighteenth-century work, save that the rhymes were somewhat less forced. Out of 82 consecutive lines in this poem the only ones not absolute, in our modern speech, are *blood: stood; throne: upon; none: moan; sphere: there; wand: hand; taste: surpast; tell ye: belly; suffice: eyes; his: kiss*; and at least three of these were probably correct according to the pronunciation of his time.

Marston's wretched

"But, Punicus, of all I 'll bear with thee,  
That fain would be thy mistress' smug monkey"

illustrates the point that lingering or forced rhymes do not befit unimportant syllables or mean words.

Jonson's *wishing: kissing* is like Crashaw's *wishes: kisses*. To him *gunpowder: quicksilver* was an allowable rhyme. His abounding fondness for the whimsical appeared even in his commemorative ode "To the Immortal Memory and Friendship of that Noble Pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison," the first "regular Pindaric" ode in English, duly equipped by the author with "turn," "counter-turn," and "stand," each three



times repeated. In this he split his own name between what earlier or later would have been called the III 2 (antistrophe) and III 3 (epode) divisions:

“He leaped the present age,  
 Possess’d with holy rage,  
 To see that bright eternal day;  
 Of which we priests and poets say  
 Such truths as we expect for happy men:  
 And there he lives with memory, and Ben

“Jonson, who sung this of him, ere he went,  
 Himself, to rest,  
 Or taste a part of that full joy he meant  
 To have express’d  
 In this bright asterism.  
 Where it were friendship’s schism,  
 Were not his Lucius long with us to tarry,  
 To separate these twi-  
 Lights, the Dioscuri;  
 And keep the one half from his Harry.  
 But fate doth so alternate the design,  
 Whilst that in heaven, this light on earth must shine.”

We should remember that in the age of “conceits” it was considered proper to introduce almost any kind of fancy into carved epitaphs themselves, and of course into mortuary poetry.

Jonson, the blank-verse tragedian of *Sejanus*, was also the light comedian of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*; and in one of his jovial moods of not unkindly satire he enlivened the literary criticism of his day by

#### “A FIT OF RHYME AGAINST RHYME

“Rhyme, the rack of finest wits,  
 That expresseth but by fits  
 True conceit,  
 Spoiling senses of their treasure,  
 Cozening judgment with a measure,  
 But false weight;  
 Wrestling words from their true calling,  
 Propping verse for fear of falling  
 To the ground;  
 Jointing syllables, drawing letters,  
 Fastening vowels, as with fetters  
 They were bound!  
 Soon as lazy thou wert known,  
 All good poetry hence was flown,  
 And art banished;

For a thousand years together  
 All Parnassus green did wither  
     And wit vanished.  
 Pegasus did fly away;  
 At the wells no muse did stay  
     But bewailed.  
 So I see the fountain dry  
 And Apollo's music die,  
     All light failed.  
 Starveling rhymes did fill the stage —  
 Not a poet in an age,  
     Worthy crowning;  
 Not a work deserving bays,  
 Nor a line deserving praise,  
     Pallas frowning.  
 Greek was free from rhyme's infection;  
 Happy Greek, by this protection,  
     Was not spoiled,  
 Whilst the Latin, queen of tongues,  
 Is not yet free from rhyme's wrongs,  
     But rests foiled.  
 Scarce the hill again does flourish,  
 Scarce the world a wit doth nourish,  
     To restore  
 Phoebus to his crown again,  
 And the muses to their brain  
     As before.  
 Vulgar languages that want  
 Words and sweetness, and be scant  
     Of true measure,  
 Tyrant rhyme hath so abused  
 That they long since have refused  
     Other pleasure.  
 He that first invented thee,  
 May his joints tormented be,  
     Cramped forever;  
 Still may syllables jar with time  
 Still may reason war with rhyme,  
     Resting never!  
 May his sense, when it would meet  
 The cold tumor in his feet,  
     Grow unsunder;  
 And his title be long Fool,  
 That in rearing such a school  
     Was the founder."

At the close of the sixteenth century the impact of the Revival of Learning upon England was so strong that a number of poets and critics made a determined effort to follow those Italians — Alberti, Trissino, and others — who had endeavored to cast out

rhyme from vernacular poetry and substitute classical measures. As Greek and Latin verse depend upon quantity and English verse upon stress or accent (usually coinciding with quantity) these attempts were foredoomed to failure. If the rules of classical quantity alone were applied to English verse, accent parted company, and the lines would not scan. If, on the other hand, English accent were substituted for classical quantity the result was so unclassical that there seemed no reason why rhyme should not be added. In fact, from Sir Philip Sidney's "Asclepiadics" to Swinburne's "Choriambics" and Tennyson's "Hendecasyllabics" the only classical measure that has become more than a scholarly amusement in any Teutonic language has been the hexameter. Goethe in German, and Clough, Kingsley, and Longfellow in English have won at least a *succès d'estime* in this form of verse; but their hexameters have been accentual throughout.

As the hexameter was the measure of Homer and Virgil, the Elizabethan classicists made it their rallying point. Some were willing that it should be rhymed; most wished to discard rhyme as a vulgar and intrusive invention. In English and mediæval Latin rhyme they found little save a multitude of cheap jingles; for to them Chaucer was antiquated and partly unintelligible; Shakespeare had not come to his own; and Spenser, whose earlier work they admired, at one time joined the anti-rhyme crusade. But the masters of Greece and Rome loomed large, in the glory of the Renaissance; therefore their methods, down to the minutest detail, should be the final models for English poetry. Dante, for some reason, was strangely ignored in the argument.

The battle began with the publication of Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570). Ascham was sympathetic with Puritanism, but looked with favor upon Italian humanistic canons. Somewhat inconsistent in his criticisms of the *Morte Darthur* and the poems of chivalry, for immorality, while he commended Virgil, Ascham felt that poetry should be artistic, not merely natural. He was a pioneer in believing classical metres transferable into English; yet, he said, English must not be a mere imitator. Ascham's position was really due to his inability to appreciate romance or romantic sources — an inability which

has survived, in some places, to our own day, and sometimes has ruled the whole literary field. His grand thesis, which was copied as indefinitely as ignorantly by many of his successors, was that "our rude beggarly rhyming" was "brought first into Italy by Goths and Huns, when all good verses and all good learning too were destroyed by them, and after carried into France and Germany, and at last received into England by men of excellent wit indeed, but of small learning and less judgment in that behalf." In wiser times, he said, men should follow wiser — that is, classical — examples. It is foolish "to eat acorns with swine, when we may freely eat wheat bread amongst men." Chaucer, Surrey, Wyatt, and others were commendable for translating some Latin authors, but if they had been "directed to follow the best examples, and not have been carried by time and custom to content themselves with that barbarous and rude rhyming, amongst their other praises, which they have justly deserved, this had not been the least, to be counted amongst men of learning and skill more like unto the Grecians than unto the Gothians in handling of their verse." Quintilian, said Ascham, did not like rhyme, and Quintilian's company was good enough for him.

But Ascham was not to blame for the miserable verse produced by the English manufacturers of "classical" metres. He perceived that the monosyllabic character of English lent itself ill to the dactyl, which was indispensable in Greek and Latin scansion. Yet, although "*carmen exametrum* doth rather trot and hobble than run smoothly in our English tongue," he saw no reason why English could not "receive *carmen iambicum* as naturally as either Greek or Latin." It would take some work and care, but work was the very thing that had been neglected by the authors of the "lewd and rude rhymes" which filled the shops.

Ascham's dislike of rhyme, he went on to assure his readers, did not begin "of any newfangle<sup>1</sup> singularity," but had long been shared by many wise men. The defence of rhyme had been due, in part, to the rhymers' ignorance, and in part to their jealousy of the superior powers of those who could write in unrhymed classical measures.

Ascham praised Surrey for dropping rhyme in his translation

<sup>1</sup> 'New-fangelnesse' is in Chaucer.



of the fourth book of the *Æneid*, but frankly said that Surrey's "feet" were "feet without joints," "that is to say, not distinct by true quantity of syllables; and so such feet be but numb feet." Admitting this, he returns to his charge, and urges his readers to avoid ignorance and idleness, the parents of English rhyme, and study Virgil and Horace as Virgil and Horace studied Homer and Euripides. Then, without giving any proof of the priority, aside from the name of Surrey, he rejoices "that even poor England prevented Italy first in spying out, then in seeking to amend, this fault in learning."

In 1575 appeared George Gascoigne's *Certayne Notes of Instruction concerning the Making of Verse or Ryme in English*, written at the request of Master Edouardo Donati. It is interesting if only for its usually correct diagrams of scansion.

Gascoigne aristocratically discriminated between "English rhymes" and "English verses," and deplored the fact that the rhymers so prevalently used the "foot of two syllables, whereof the first is depressed or made short, and the second is elevate or made long." Excessive alliteration he denounced, and said: "*Ne quid nimis*"; though this "figure," "being modestly used, lendeth good grace to a verse." Keep the words in their proper pronunciation and order, unless "rhyme enforceth"; but even then yield sparingly. "Do not let rhyme run away with reason, so that the sense is twisted by a second word which mars your idea, or you go back and spoil the first word for the sake of the second; . . . but do you always hold your first determined invention, and do rather search the bottom of your brains for apt words than change good reason for rumbling rhyme."

With the *naïveté* which makes his treatise delightful in the acrid controversy of the time, he gives us a little rhyming dictionary, as follows:

"To help you a little with rhyme (which is also a plain young scholar's lesson), work thus: when you have set down your first verse take the last word thereof and count over all the words of the self-same sound by order of the alphabet: as, for example, the last word of your first line is *care*, to rhyme therewith you have *bare*, *clare*, *dare*, *fare*, *gare*, *hare*, and *share*, *nare*, *snare*, *rare*, *stare*, and *ware*, etc. Of all these take that which best may

serve your purpose, carrying reason with rhyme; and if none of them will serve so, then alter the last word of your former verse, but yet do not willingly alter the meaning of your invention."

Finally, "I had forgotten a notable kind of rhyme, called riding rhyme, and that is such as our Master and Father Chaucer used in his *Canterbury tales*, and in divers other delectable and light enterprises; but, though it come to my remembrance somewhat out of order, it shall not yet come altogether out of time, for I will now tell you a conceit which I had before forgotten to write: you may see (by the way) that I hold a preposterous order in my traditions; but, as I said before, I write moved by good will, and not to show my skill. Then to return to my matter, as this riding rhyme serveth most aptly to write a merry tale, so rhyme royal is fittest for a grave discourse. Ballads are best of matters of love, and rondlettes most apt for the beating or handling of an adage or common proverb; sonnets serve as well in matters of love as of discourse; dizaynes and sixaines for short fantasies; verlayes for an effectual proposition, although by the name you might otherwise judge of verlayes; and the long verse of twelve and fourteen syllables, although it be nowadays used in all themes, yet in my judgment it would serve best for psalms and hymns."

The correspondence (1579-1580) between Edmund Spenser and Gabriel Harvey on "Reformed Versifying" and related topics is of interest because of the eminence of the former and the activity of the latter. Harvey, as a prose writer, was sometimes turgid and inelegant, and always without charm. No poet himself — his verse is for the most part atrocious — he was a poor advocate of poetic reforms. He may be described as a sort of Cotton Mather in the field of æsthetics. In his letters he emphasized, as had Ascham, the superiority of the long-prized masterpieces of classical antiquity over the crude jingling ballads and romances of the new European literatures.

Harvey was a "hexametrist," but failed to understand blank verse, probably because it was not classical in form. Though a classicist and anti-rhymer, Harvey was an advocate of stress as over mere quantity. To him accent was the important thing, and syllables were made long or short only by "the common allowed and received prosody, taken up by a universal consent

of all, and continued by a general use and custom of all." Yet he thought that English verse could be improved by the further application of classical methods to its rhythm. Incidentally, he hoped to diminish the divergences between rhythmical stress, accent, and quantity by securing "one and the same orthography" for English. Harvey's denunciations of the attempts made by some of his fellow-classicists of the extremer order to justify "*majēstie, royāltie, honēstie, sciēnces, facūlties, excellent, tavērnour, manfūlly, faithfūlly, . . . bargāineth, follōwing, har-rōwing, thoroughly,*" etc., show that rhyme and accent cannot always be taken as a proof of contemporary pronunciation. "Say you *suddāinly*, if you like; by my *certainly* and *certainly* I will not. You may perceive by the premises (which very word I would have you note, by the way, too) that the Latin is no rule for us." "The majesty of our speech" he accounted "the only infallible and sovereign rule of all rules." "In short, this is the very short and the long: position neither maketh short nor long in our tongue, but so far as we can get her good leave."

With so much of common sense in his idea of English versification, it would seem strange that Harvey produced so much bad non-rhyming verse and so severely criticised the rhymes of better poets than himself, did we not remember that he prided himself on being "the inventor of the English hexameter, whom learned M. Stanihurst imitated in his Virgil, and excellent Sir Philip Sidney disdained not to follow in his *Arcadia* and elsewhere." The beauty of his hexameters may be illustrated by a very few lines — the fewer the better:

"Virtue sendeth a man to Renown; Fame lendeth Abundance;  
Fame with Abundance maketh a man thrice blessed and happy;  
So the reward of famous Virtue makes many wealthy,  
And the regard of wealthy Virtue makes many blessed:  
O blessed Virtue, blessed Fame, blessed Abundance,  
O that I had you three with the loss of thirty commencements."

It will be noticed that "blessed" is accented in two ways — twice by quantity and once by pronunciation — in the same line.

These are a fair specimen, not the worst. The reader will be surprised to learn that

"For squibbing and declaiming against many fruitless"

is a hexameter, in the opinion of its proud author.



In various letters and prefaces, in later years, Harvey continued to air his views and his personal grievances; but added little to his previous argument. The hexameter was "the sovereign of verses and the high controller of rhymes"; it was good enough for Homer and Virgil, and of it neither Alexander in conquest nor Augustus in majesty was ashamed, "but accounted it the only gallant trumpet of brave and heroical acts." "And I wis the English is nothing too good to imitate the Greek or Latin."

In view of the fact that he was the greatest English poet between Chaucer and Shakespeare, Spenser's letters show an amazing difference between critical theory and mellifluous practice. They are fortunately few and short, being rather wordy and whimsical; and they seem to indicate that the writer was dabbling in a kind of criticism in which he felt no very deep interest. There can be no doubt, however, that Spenser, who was recognized by his contemporaries as a great poet, and was himself pretty thoroughly Italianated, notwithstanding his originality, lent the influence of his name to the anti-rhyme crusade. He went farther than Harvey in claiming that "carpenter" could be sounded "carpénter" in verse, as bound by classical laws of quantity. This was stoutly denied by Harvey. Spenser's original work in unrhymed classical metres is barely scannable, even according to Latin laws, and not at all according to his own English practice in his real (rhymed) poems. It must be admitted, however, that some of the lines are rather pleasing prose, or even poetry, in their balance of contrasted ideas. Spenser's theory, at this time, was that we should "measure our accents by the sound, reserving the quantity to the verse." The difficulty with this neat maxim may be briefly stated: Quantity is either sounded or it is not. If sounded, it destroys the ordinary pronunciation; if not sounded, nobody will stop to think of it at all. Whatever Greek or Latin quantity was, it must have had some pleasurable and regulating effect on the ear; but the quantity in Spenser's line:

"Say thát raging love dóth appál the wéak stomách "

certainly regulates nothing.

In 1579 "E. K." (name not known) addressed a letter to Gabriel



Harvey in praise of the *Shepherd's Calendar* of Spenser: "To the most excellent and learned, both orator and poet, Master Gabriel Harvey, his very special and singular good friend E. K. commendeth the good liking of this his labor and the patronage of the new poet." As regards rhyme, "E. K.'s" chief grievance is that it leads to the misuse of the English language by the unwarrantable introduction of "pieces and rags of other languages, borrowing here of the French, there of the Italian, every where of the Latin," making "our English tongue a gallimaufry or hodgepodge of all other speeches." But "what in most English writers useth to be loose, and as it were ungirt, in this author is well grounded, finely framed, and strongly trussed up together. In regard whereof, I scorn and spue out the rakehellly rout of our ragged rhymers (for so themselves used to hunt the letter), which without learning boast, without judgment jangle, without reason rage and foam, as if some instinct of poetical spirit had newly ravished them above the meanness of common capacity."

In 1582 Richard Stanyhurst published in Leyden a translation of the first four books of the *Æneid*, in fearsome hexameters of the Harvey style. In his preface he made the now usual attack on the "wooden rhymers" who swarmed in the stationers' shops; never instructed in any grammar school, and satisfied with the commendation of the ignorant. But Stanyhurst, though he undertook to scan by quantity, agreed with Harvey in saying that "the ear, not orthography, must decide the quantity as near as is possible." "Why should we, with the strings of the Latin rules, cramp our tongue more than the Latins do fetter their speech, as it were, with the chains of the Greek precepts?"

Sir Philip Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie*, written about 1583 and printed 1595, is the only one of the critical treatises of the period which has become a classic. It was immediately accepted as important, and influenced all succeeding Elizabethan students of poetry. This sweet-tempered critic and creator of verse stood serenely between the two schools in the rhyme controversy, mainly ignoring it. The lack of esteem of poetry in England was, he thought, the fault of "poet-apes, not poets"; and he conjured his readers "no more to laugh at the name of poets as though they

were next inheritors to fools, no more to jest at the reverent title of a rhymers."

Sidney's "quantitative" verse, though inferior to his original work, is much better than that of the classical reformers already noticed.

"Ane schort Treatise conteining some reulis and cautelis to be observit and eschewit in Scottis Poesie" (1584), by the illustrious and all-wise King James the Sixth of Scotland and King James the First of England — the President Roosevelt or Kaiser Wilhelm of his day — is interesting in several ways. He was the latest to advise alliteration: "Let all your verse be Literall, sa far as may be, quhatsumever kynde they be of, bot speciallie Tumbling verse for flyting. Be literall I meane that the maist part of your lyne sall rynne upon a letter, as this tumbling lyne rynnys upon *F* :

"'Fetching fude for to feid it fast furth of the Farie.'"

King James's rule, "that ye rhyme not twice in one syllable; as, for example, that ye make not *prove* and *reprove* rhyme together," may be regarded as the chronological end of a once permissible custom. *Question* and *digestion* he gives as examples of words accented on the antepenult. He advises against lines composed entirely of monosyllables, "because the most part of them are indifferent, and may be in short or long place as ye like. Some words of divers syllables are likeways indifferent, as

"'Thairfore, restore.  
I thairfore, then.'

In the first *thairfore*, *thair* is short and *fore* is long; in the other, *thair* is long and *fore* is short; and yet both flow alike well." This bit of common sense is interesting, coming as it does in the middle of the period of the attempted revival of quantity in English.

"*A Discourse of English poetrie*. Together with the authors judgment, touching the re-formation of our English Verse. By William Webbe, Graduate" (1586), was a violent but consistent attack on the "rude multitude of rustical rhymers who will be called poets," and an attempt to teach them the "right practice

and orderly course of true poetry.” Webbe — who would deserve scant attention had not his treatise been given serious consideration by student after student — found the country “pestered, all shops stuffed, and every study furnished” with “innumerable sorts of English books, and infinite fardels of printed pamphlets.” He knew “no memorable work written by any poet in our English speech until twenty years past.” By this he must definitely have meant to belittle Chaucer, for he proceeded to discuss (apparently without first-hand knowledge) Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate, whom he regarded as poets of about equally low rank. He denounced the “brutish poetry” “whereby the natural property of the sweet Latin verse” had been converted into “a bald kind of rhyming,” the infection whereof would, he thought, never be rooted up in England: “I mean this tinkerly verse which we call rhyme.” Then followed Ascham’s Goth-Hun theory of the origin of rhyme. The author of *Piers Plowman* was the first known to Webbe to have “observed the quantity of our verse without the curiosity of rhyme.”

Webbe, on the whole, was a rather ignorant imitator; and the rest of his treatise largely consisted of paraphrases of what had already been said by Ascham and others, eked out by original diatribes against “the uncountable rabble of rhyming ballad-makers and compilers of senseless sonnets.” But though rhyme was a poor thing in itself, of barbarous origin and vulgar use, it had become so ingrafted in English, and had borne such good fruit at the hands of the best poets, that Webbe would retain it, as of necessity, and dignify it by better practice. Rhyme or rhythm ought to be a just proportion in any kind of composition; and especially in verse should it be guarded by all possible limitations, “bettered, and made more artificial, according to the worthiness of our speech.” Rhyme, with all its faults, “in our English tongue beareth as good grace, or rather better, than in any other.” There should be, however, a “far more learned manner of versifying,” which Webbe proceeded to explain. Verses should be answerable to each other, or to the accompanying tune; words should not be wrested from their “natural inclination or affectation,” “or more truly the true quantity thereof”; and they should be made to “fall together

mutually in rhyme, that is, in words of like sound, but so as the words be not disordered for the rhyme's sake, nor the sense hindered. These be the most principal observations which I think requisite in an English verse"; and certainly nobody can object to them. But Webbe was not aware that he was exactly describing the practice and the triumph of Chaucer himself.

Apparently Webbe started with the intention of attacking rhyme as such, but, made timorous by the fame and excellence of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, then esteemed the *ne plus ultra* of poetic attainment, he changed his course and declared himself merely a judicious reformer, on classical lines. He then proceeded to give schemes of feet and verses of various lengths, rhyme-arrangements, etc., in the course of which he sensibly and clearly indicated the naturalness of the iambic movement in English, and the impossibility of transposing it for the sake of quantity, real or alleged. Wrest no word, unless its accent be indifferent, from "his natural propriety." Furthermore, do not obscure or twist the fit grammatical order for the sake of rhyme. Then, having in one catholic paragraph attacked rhyme as the cause of "the greatest decay of that good order of versifying which might ere this have been established in our speech," and also apologized for it as deserving "praise, especially where it is with good judgment ordered," Webbe gave the elements of a rhyming-dictionary, even advising the memorizing of words for the sake of fluency in extempore rhyming, and took time to explain certain "rare devices and pretty inventions" wherewith rhymers might amuse their readers and hearers; but yet — for it was time for his pendulum to swing back again — he was "fully and certainly persuaded that if the true kind of versifying in imitation of Greeks and Latins had been practised in the English tongue, and put in use from time to time by our poets, who might have continually been mending and polishing the same, every one according to their several gifts, it would long ere this have aspired to as full perfection as in any other tongue whatsoever."

Some of Webbe's quantities, as given in his illustrative examples of feet and verses, are interesting. Omitting those which are common in present use, we find *goodness* called a spondee



(—); *hither* a pyrrhic (∪ ∪); *dying* an iambus (∪ —); *forgiveness* a molossus (— —); *merrily* a tribrach (∪ ∪ ∪); *travelers* an anapaest (∪ ∪ —); *remembers* a bacchius (∪ — —); *accorded* a palimbachius (— — ∪); *dangerous* a cretic (— ∪ —); *rejoiced* an amphibrach (∪ — ∪). The *-ly* of *gladly* (adverb) is short, and the *-lie* of *goodlie* (adjective) long. Surrey's hexameters seemed to Webbe to be "without regard of true quantity of syllables." He included in his treatise hexameters and sapphics of his own; but his idea of hexameters showing "the very perfection" of "all the rules and observations of the best versifying" is shown by his citing, from "one Master Watson, fellow of St. John's College in Cambridge, about 40 years past," the following melodious and easily-scanned lines:

"All trāvēllērs dō glādliē rēpōrt grēat prāise tō Ūlyssēs,  
Fōr thāt hē knēw mǎnle mēn's mǎnnērs, ānd sǎw mǎny cittyēs."

It was by such means that Webbe trusted to "have English poetry at a higher price in a short space: and the rabble of bald rhymes shall be turned to famous works, comparable (I suppose) with the best works of poetry in other tongues."

In 1589, with his preface to Robert Greene's "*Menaphon*: Camilla's Alarum to slumbering Euphues in his melancholy cell at Silendra," — the preface being addressed "to the Gentlemen Students of both universities" — appeared Thomas Nash, the most violent of all the controversialists, on either side of the rhyme discussion. Nash vigorously opposed Harvey and his school. Like Campion, who was to follow, he utterly disbelieved in the possibility of the hexameter in English, as taking the place it occupied in ancient literatures; but he did not share Campion's urbanity. He was so angry that he could not stop to be grammatical, when he thought of the "idiot art masters" who "think to outbrave better pens" with the "swelling bumbast of a bragging blank verse. Indeed, it may be the ingrafted overflow of some kilcow conceit, that overcloyeth their imagination with a more than drunken resolution, being not extemporal in the invention of any other means to vent their manhood, commits the digestion of their cholerick incumbrances to the spacious volubility of a drumming decasillabon."

Stanyhurst, he says, in his hexameter Virgil "revived by his ragged quill such carterly variety as no hodge ploughman in a country but would have held as the extremity of clownery;" in proof of which Nash quoted these two lines from a description of a tempest:

"Then did he make heaven's vault to rebound, with rounce hobble  
hobble  
Of ruff raff roaring, with thwick thwack thurlery bouncing."

Nash returned to the subject of poetry in *The Anatomy of Absurdity*, issued the same year. Here rhyme was not his special theme, but he agreed with the anti-rhymers in denouncing "those exiled Abbie-lubbers" from whose idle pens proceeded "those worn-out impressions of the feigned nowhere acts of Arthur of the Round Table, Arthur of Little Britain, Sir Tristram, Huon of Bordeaux, the Squire of Low Degree, the Four Sons of Amon, with infinite many others." Nor could he be patient with the old romancers who made "scambling shift" to end their verses alike; and he cited some of the rougher lines in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*.

Nash was merely a literary soldier of fortune, to whom it made little difference whether he were attacking Puritanism or hexameters, rhyme or no-rhyme.

Full in its view and refreshingly temperate in its manner was the famous *Art of English Poesy* which George Puttenham published in 1589. In thoroughness and real helpfulness there had been nothing so good in previous English criticism. Its modesty, and its technical rather than general purpose, gave it a practical value for those who did not care for the crotchets of Harvey and the Harveyans, or for the eloquent generalities of Sidney. Puttenham once more declared accent to be the final arbiter, but readily admitted the serviceability of the study of Latin masters. On the other hand, he allowed romantic poems in unclassical forms. If English had not, and never could have, Greek and Latin feet, it had "instead thereof twenty other curious points in that skill more than they ever had, by reason of our rhyme and tunable concords or symphony, which they never observed."

Indeed, he anticipated many of the scholarly conclusions concerning rhyme which were to be newly set forth in our own day. Over against Greek and Latin quantity, he tells us, and earlier than that art, was a "metrical poesy" and a "manner of rhyme" used by the Hebrews and Chaldees. So "our vulgar running poesy" was "the first and most ancient poesy, and the most universal." "The American, the Perusine, and the very Cannibal do sing and also say their highest and holiest matters in certain rhyming versicles, and not in prose, which proves also that our manner of vulgar poesy is more ancient than the artificial of the Greeks and Latins, ours coming by instinct of nature, which was before art or observation, and used with the savage and uncivil, who were before all science or civility. The natural poesy, therefore, being aided and amended by art, and not utterly altered or obscured, but some sign left of it (as the Greeks and Latins have left none), is no less to be allowed and commended than theirs." This statement could not be bettered to-day; its idea lies at the foundation of the present review of the history of rhyme in England and elsewhere.

Puttenham then proceeds to take up in order, and in a singularly agreeable style, the decline of classical verse; the rise of end-rhyme in Greek and Latin, under Northern influences, until it "altered and almost split their manner of poesy"; and the popularity of all sorts of rhyming Latin jingles — political, medical, proverbial, satirical, etc. — in Charlemagne's time and after. Even Ovid had rhymed by chance, and Puttenham quotes the well-known "*Quot coelum stellas*," as he had already given examples of mediæval rhymes. Then comes one of the "defences" of poetry so common at that day, with an appeal to keep verse from "vain conceits, or vicious, or infamous," and to limit it to wise or properly witty ideas, — "the praise of virtue and reproof of vice." Ancient forms of poetry are reviewed at length, but without much originality; next the author turns to the "vulgar makings" or imitations of the verse of former times: "interlude, song, ballad, carol, and ditty" — terms borrowed from the French, but the word "song" is "our natural Saxon English word." The chief native poets, as known

to the writer, are characterized by name, Chaucer being "the most renowned of them all."

The two following books of the treatise consist of a detailed poetical rhetoric, under the divisions of "proportion poetical," or form, and "ornament." All the arts appeal to various senses by different but related means, "verses or rhyme by a kind of musical utterance, by reason of a certain congruity in sounds pleasing to the ear." The monosyllabic character of English prevents the adoption of classical feet. Ancient quantity was "a certain numerosity in utterance." "Take this away from them — I mean the running of their feet — there is nothing of curiosity among them more than with us, nor yet so much."

As for English measures, the caesura at the end of the eighth syllable in a line of fourteen "is tedious, for the length of the verse keepeth the ear too long from his delight, which is to hear the cadence or the tunable accent in the end of the verse." But the caesura ought to be kept precisely, in any long verse, if but as a law to "correct the licentiousness of rhymers," who, if allowed to go without rule, produce nothing better than "rhyme doggerel." Though English has a "numerosity" or a "certain flowing utterance by slipper words and syllables," something like Greek or Latin quantity, it must chiefly rely upon "tunable consents in the latter end of our verses," for which the monosyllabic nature of English is excellently fitted. Puttenham preferred the rhyme-accent on the ultimate, and endured the penultimate, but thought the antepenultimate suitable only for light, trivial, or comical use. Rhymers who wrench accent or orthography (as in rhyming *restore: door: poor; ram: came; bean: den*) have not mastered their art. Rhymes both in the middle and at the end of verses are cloying, trivial, and objectionable, save in ballads or tavern-poetry; "in our courtly maker we banish them utterly." Skelton, who was fond of them, was but a "rude railing rhymers," pleasing only the popular ear.

"Situation" is Puttenham's term for length and arrangement of words, lines, and rhymes, which he declares to be of large influence in the poetical result. His diagrams of couplets, stanzas, etc., are numerous and clever. He wastes one chapter by giving all sorts of devices of rhymes in the form of eggs,



lozenges, triangles, columns, pyramids, anagrams, posies, etc.; but we must remember that he could hardly perceive that he was thereby playing into the hands of the anti-rhymers by making the subject ridiculous. After all, it was near the beginning of the century in which even the sensible Sir Thomas Browne was deeply interested in quincunxes.

Some of his illustrations of feet give countenance to the quantitative attempts of the Harveyans, as *pātience* (dactyl); *pērsisting* (molossus); *mānifold* (anapaest); *lāmēnting* (bacchius); *fōrsākēn* (antibacchius); *ēxcēllēnt* (amphimacer). But Puttenham admitted that "by usurpation" some words were in his time accented even back of the antepenult, of which he instances *hónorable*, *mátrimony*, *pátrimony*, and *míserable*, which "neither make a sweet cadence, nor easily find any word of like quantity to match them."

Sir John Harington's preface to his own translation of the *Orlando Furioso* (1591) "in English heroical verse," defended the use of two-syllabled and three-syllabled rhymes, to which some critics had taken exception. To him *civility* rhymed as properly with *facility*, *gentility*, and eight other cited words as with *see*, or *decree*, which he calls the "ancient manner of rhyme." He justifies himself by the French feminine rhyme, and by Sir Philip Sidney, who, he says, not only uses but affects such rhymes as *signify: dignify*; *hide away: bide away*.

In Francis Meres' "*Palladis Tamia; Wit's Treasury*" (1598), a rambling note-book in catalogue style, merely compendious of other men's opinions, *Piers Plowman* is mentioned as "the first that observed the true quantity of our verse without the curiosity of rhyme"; and Surrey is commended for avoiding "the fault of rhyming" in his translation of the fourth book of the *Æneid*.

An interesting remark is that of George Chapman, in the preface (1598) to an installment of his rhymed hexameter translation of Homer: "Let the length of the verse never discourage your endeavors; for talk our quidditital Italianists of what proportion soever their strutting lips affect, unless it be in these couplets into which I have hastily translated this Shield, they shall never do Homer so much right in any octaves, canzones,

canzonets, or with whatsoever fustian epigraphs they shall entitle their measures."

Professor Gregory Smith, in the introduction to his *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, makes two effective quotations suggesting the downfall of the anti-rhyme movement. One is from the *Hymnus in Cynthiam* of Chapman's *The Shadow of Night*:

"Sweet poesy  
Will not be clad in her supremacy  
With those strange garments (Rome's hexameters),  
As she is English; but in right prefers  
Our native robes (put on with skilful hands —  
English heroics) to those antic garlands."<sup>1</sup>

The other is from Bacon's *De Augmentis*:

"Illud reprehendendum, quod quidam antiquitatis nimium studiosi linguas modernas ad mensuras antiquas (heroicas, elegiacas, sapphicas, etc.) traducere conati sunt; quas ipsarum linguarum fabrica respuit, nec minus aures exhorrent. In hujusmodi rebus sensus judicium artis praeceptis praeponendum. . . . Neque vero ars est, sed artis abusus, cum illa naturam non perficiat sed pervertat."

Thomas Campion's *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (1602) is chiefly interesting, like Spenser's letters, because of the wide divergence between the poet's theory as an anti-rhymer and his success as a rhymers. Campion was no Spenser, but he was a true lyricist; and the rediscovery, or reglorification, of his lyrical poems has been one of the characteristic features of the past thirty years in literary criticism. In his dedication Campion says that "the vulgar and unartificial [inartistic] custom of rhyming hath, I know, deterred many excellent wits from the exercise of English poesy."

In this treatise Campion leaves no doubt of his position. "That vulgar and easy kind of poesy . . . which we abusively call rhyme and meter" began in "lack-learning times, and in barbarized Italy." Alliteration he leaves to its "own ruin," and proceeds to set forth the faults of the rhymers. They do not know the difference between an iambus and a trochee; they put a pyrrhic in place of an iambus; and they turn their backs

<sup>1</sup> Curiously, this last line, with its "antic garlands," is almost as far from modern pronunciation as are some of the twists of the anti-rhymers.

on the glorious triumphs of classical verse. The "childish titillation of rhyming" is a poor thing to set against "the divinity of the Romans and Grecians," which was all in verse. Would not the rhyming Italians, Frenchmen, and Spaniards, if it were possible, gladly see their work "translated into the ancient numbers"? He bids such "numbers"

"Tell them that pity or perversely scorn  
 Poor English poesy as the slave to rhyme,  
 You are those lofty numbers that revive  
 Triumphs of princes and stern tragedies."

But he admits that "the Heroical verse [hexameter] that is distinguished by the dactyl hath been oftentimes attempted in our English tongue, but with passing pitiful success; and no wonder, seeing it is an attempt altogether against the nature of our language."

In little chapters on iambics, "the iambic dimeter, or the English march," trochaics, the "English Elegeick," sapphics, ditties and odes, and anacreontics, Campion sets forth his theories, with numerous original examples, of which many are clever or even musical; only the epigrams being atrocious. "Some ears," says he, "accustomed altogether to the fatness of rhyme, may perhaps except against the cadences of these numbers; but let any man judicially examine them, and he shall find they close of themselves so perfectly that the help of rhyme were not only in them superfluous but also absurd."

Campion said definitely, like several of his predecessors, that accent was diligently to be observed, "for chiefly by the accent in any language the true value of the syllables is to be measured." But, like them, he disobeyed this sound law, and in his lists of quantities stretched the natural pronunciation until it became unrecognizable. The wonder is that he so often escaped, in his original unrhymed verse, the corduroy-road effects of most of his fellows. Here are some of his tabulated quantities: *miseriēs*, *duties* (because "the last syllable of all words in the plural number that have two or more vowels before *s* are [*sic*] long"); *dēvinīng*. The following are short if the word following do begin with a vowel: "*doth, though, thou, now, they, too, fly, die, true, due, see, are, far, you, thee*"; but "these monosyllables are

always short: *a, the, thy, she, we, be, he, no, to, go, so, do.*" This is of course purely arbitrary. Campion abruptly closed with the very just remark that "as the grammarians leave many syllables to the authority of the poets, so do I likewise leave many to their judgments; and withal thus conclude, that there is no art begun and perfected at one enterprise."

That Campion published his *Books of Airs*, in rhyme, ten or fifteen years after this disquisition, may fairly be taken as an abandonment of his theories. The whole of his anti-rhyme argument is confuted by one such stanza as

"Shall I come, sweet love, to thee,  
When the evening beams are set?  
Shall I not excluded be?  
Will you find no feigned lett?  
Let me not, for pity, more,  
Tell the long hours at your door."

When, says Carlyle, Napoleon planted his cannon in front of the church of St. Roch, he "blew the French Revolution into space." Something similar might be said of Samuel Daniel's *A Defence of Rhyme*, which appeared about 1603, were it not for its good temper and quiet style. It marked the end — with one sporadic exception — of the movement against rhyme which succumbed before its common sense.

This *Defence* was in the form of a letter in reply to Campion's *Observations*, and was addressed to "a learned gentleman," that is, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke; and afterwards, when printed, to "all the worthy lovers and learned professors of rhyme within his majesty's dominions." The author's original purpose, he tells us, was to defend his "own undertakings in that kind."

Daniel's command of the subject is so full, and his "sweet reasonableness" so refreshingly unlike the acrid temper of some of his predecessors, that one is tempted to quote half his tractate. But as it is now accessible in Professor Gregory Smith's volumes, a brief summary will suffice.

He had thought that rhyme was to be accepted "as if from a grant of nature"; but it seemed that it too, in a time when many things were challenged, was to be decried by some as barbarous,



and defended by others as fit and right. He himself must either quit the use of rhyme, or defend its practice. Every rhymers in the kingdom was interested in the case, and for them, as well as for himself, Daniel would speak. All languages have their own metrical characteristics and uses; and English has as good a right to employ what befits its own nature as has any other tongue, ancient or modern. Accent, harmony, and numbers in English so combine as to give as musical results in rhyme as any language can show. Rhyme is so widespread a thing that it seems "an hereditary eloquence proper to all mankind." Then follows a list of sixteen other peoples using it. Even Latin was not satisfied until it had adopted so good a vehicle of poetic expression.

Rhyme had been universally influential in expressing and arousing the deepest feelings of humanity; whereas the new metrical experiments had not delighted, stirred, or satisfied, nor did Daniel think they ever would "in our climate, if they show no more work of wonder than yet we see." In fact, the new quantitative verses were "laboured measures," and for "the general sort" "but as an orderly prose when we have all done." Art ought not to be a thing to confound the understanding. Rhyme calls for the highest and best efforts, and is wings, not an impediment.

The stanza, with its rich variety and effective climax, was never attained by the Greeks and Latins; but all our understandings are not to be built by the square of Greece and Italy. We are the children of nature as well as they; we are not so placed out of the way of judgment but that "the same sun of discretion shineth upon us." The attempts of the quantitative poets in Italy had been as unsuccessful as those in England, and unrhymed verse had been let alone by such true poets as Petrarch and Tasso. The classical reformers' eight new numbers in English, when examined, proved to be either old measures under new names, or else dependent on strained accents. It is useless to try to "turn the fair stream and full course of her [English] accents into the shallow current of a less uncertainty, clean out of the way of her known delight."

But though Daniel undertook to "defend the sacred monu-

ments" of the national genius, as expressed in time-honored forms, he frankly admitted that there were some things in rhyme which he did not like. One was "these continual cadences of couplets used in long and continued poems," which he found "very tiresome and unpleasing, by reason that still, methinks, they run on with a sound of one nature, and a kind of certainty which stuffs the delight rather than entertains it." To pass over the rhyme, when the violence of the matter will break through, "is rather graceful than otherwise." Tragedies, too, best comport with blank verse and dispense with rhyme, save in choruses, or "where a sentence shall require a couplet." Daniel's own experiments in putting rhymes more than one line apart he hardly regarded as successful, "alternate or cross rhymes holding still the best place in my affection." Feminine rhymes should not carelessly or at random be mixed with others; they are best for ditties.

Yet there can be no absolute law in these matters. All things change; and poets are proverbially self-willed and self-satisfied. Even good satisfactory English words are displaced by poor foreign substitutes. "But this is but a character of that perpetual revolution which we see to be in all things that never remain the same: and we must herein be content to submit ourselves to the law of the time, which in a few years will make all that for which we now contend *Nothing*."

This was the end, save that sixty years later Milton himself — Milton, the "mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies" — in the preface to his masterpiece, ranged himself with the opponents of rhyme, and against his own triumphant practice as one of the greatest masters of rhyme who ever lived. The rhymed English stanza had never been brought to higher excellence than in the ode *On the Morn of Christ's Nativity*; no sonnets had spoken in mightier music than that of

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine summits cold;"

while *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* had shown the capabilities of the four-stressed rhymed measure to turn with infallible effectiveness from iambic to trochaic and back again, according to

the demands of the thought, and had forever created a new *genre* in English: that of the idyllic combination of description and reflection. His other triumphs in rhyme need no new chronicle here, nor his work in the two foreign languages most concerned in the rhyme-controversy, namely, the Italian and the Latin. It is enough to cite the definite words which he prefixed to our great blank-verse epic:

"The measure is English heroic verse without rhyme, as that of Homer in Greek and of Virgil in Latin, — rhyme being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre; graced indeed since by the use of some famous modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse, than else they would have expressed them. Not without cause therefore some both Italian and Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rhyme both in longer and shorter works, as have also long since our best English tragedies, as a thing of itself, to all judicious ears, trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings, — a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory. This neglect then of rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming."

But we must remember that nobody had denied the majesty or the necessity of blank verse in English, which was neither a novelty nor a heresy; and it is significant that Milton never put himself on record as favoring or practising the "quantitative" writing of the hexametrist.<sup>1</sup> He was a free inheritor and user

<sup>1</sup> Landor, in one of his *Imaginary Conversations*, makes Milton say to Marvel: "My nephew reads Latin to me; and he reminded me one day that Sir Philip Sidney tried his hand at turning our English into Latin hexameters. Some of the Germans have done likewise. English and German hexameters sound as a heavy cart sounds bouncing over

of English as it had been used by his predecessors who were true and great poets: by Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare. The rhythm in *Paradise Lost* itself is not more important than in the rhymed *Ode on the Nativity*; if the monosyllabic blank-verse

“Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death”

needs no supporting rhyme, neither does the sonnet-line

“They also serve who only stand and wait.”

Whether Milton was rhyming or writing blank verse, he was simply making the best use of means toward ends. Thought-rhyme and end-rhyme in the splendid

“Ring out, ye crystal spheres,  
Once bless our human ears,  
If ye have power to touch our senses so;  
And let your silver chime  
Move in melodious time;  
And let the base of heaven’s deep organ blow;  
And with your ninefold harmony  
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony”

were one in his creating mind.

Omitting many technical points, I must call attention, in this *Ode*, to a few important indications of contemporary pronunciation: *unsufferable: council-table; began: ocean; alone: union; said: made; great: set; sweat: seat; fast: haste.*

In *Lycidas*, which is rhymed throughout, the effect is curiously rhymeless until the closing passage — doubtless because of the variant line-lengths in an essentially slow movement, and the frequency of run-on lines, such as

“Comes the blind fury with the abhorred shears  
And slits the thin-spun life.”

This has a distinctly Shakespearean swing, and so does

“And when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
Grate on their scrannel-pipes of wretched straw.”

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boulders.” — Crump’s ed., VI, 39. — Elsewhere Landor said of the hexameter (writing in the measure itself): “Latin and Greek are alone its languages. We have a measure fashioned by Milton’s own hand, a fuller, a deeper, a louder.”



Milton, in the chorus of *Samson Agonistes*, used lines of different stresses and lengths (sometimes almost unscannable recitative), with rhymes at random, and apparently accidental assonances. Such freedom is roughly suggestive of Greek choral methods.

## VIII

### FORMAL RHYME

One two, three four, five six, seven eight, nine ten,  
One two, three four, five six, seven eight, and then  
Add here an adjective, perhaps a thought,  
Start with a trochee, and your couplet's wrought.

SOME such formula as this was the rule of most English verse from Dryden's *Religio Laici*, at the close of the seventeenth century, to the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge, at the end of the eighteenth.

The history of the heroic couplet has been traced many times; never better than in Gosse's *From Shakespeare to Pope*. In one sense Waller was its earliest promoter; in another sense Donne. There is a curious priority in Donne's

"How sits this city, late most populous,  
Thus solitary, and like a widow thus?  
Amplest of nations, queen of provinces,  
She was, who now thus tributary is"

(*The Lamentations of Jeremy.*)

—it is a sort of reminiscence of Wyatt and anticipation of Dryden. Donne — who always, it is evident, pronounced his verses very slowly — rhymes *humorist: chest; here: philosopher; tye: body; earnest: best; gone: dissolution; there: tear*. Once he has the assonance *other: lover*.

But in a truer sense nobody can be picked out as the chronological leader of the procession. The iambic pentameter rhymed couplet was nothing new in our poetry. It was Chaucer's vehicle for the greater part of the *Canterbury Tales*; it formed an integral element in Shakespeare's earlier plays; it closed the Shakespearean sonnet. Yet the "heroic couplet" from Waller

to Pope was a different thing from the previous rhymed *aa* pentameters. In it the line expressed an idea, or a unified part of an idea; and the couplet brought the thought, or the clearly individualized part of a thought, to a symmetrical close. Seldom did the meaning of a line run on into its successor, and still more seldom did a couplet fail to carry its own proper burden. The line was just long enough for a neat statement, the couplet just adequate to give that statement a turn. The merit of the product was its finish; the demerit its sacrifice of imagination to thought.

When French regularity seemed altogether delightful in England; when, in the non-original critical and observant eighteenth century, all Britain considered reflection superior to imaginative creation; this old form, revised in the manner already noted, proved to be the very thing needed.

If the highest function of poetry were to philosophize or to describe, nothing better than such a vehicle could be asked. Tens of thousands of pleased and instructed readers have found Pope's *Essay on Man* the *ne plus ultra* of prosodic utterance. In my native New England town — at that time having say two thousand inhabitants — two separately printed editions were issued seventy years after Pope's death; and its popularity elsewhere was not less. That popularity continues to-day. Those who read little or nothing know many parts of the *Essay on Man* and the *Essay on Criticism* from their mere currency in familiar quotation. They are coin of the intellectual realm. Many a modern reader finds their practical philosophy, expressed with absolute clearness, better worth while than Wordsworth's "mooning" about nature, or Poe's wandering in the mystic mid-region of Weir. In some ways Pope is the most successful man who ever wrote English verse; and he is successful because nobody else so well caught the very pulse of the machine.

But it was, after all, a machine and nothing more. Upon that fact rests its triumph, and therein lies its fatal limitation. The rhymed couplet of the eighteenth century was preëminently the vehicle for uninspired didacticism and superficial description. Here "An honest man's the noblest work of God"; here "Hope springs eternal in the human breast: Man never is, but always

to be blest;" here rivers and poems are "Strong without rage, without o'erflowing, full"; here, on every topic,

"The relish of the Muse consists in rhyme;  
One verse must meet another like a chime."

In the English eighteenth-century couplet, neither the first nor the second line regularly gave the law to the other. The couplet virtually became a stanza, and the string of couplets a poem of few stanzas or many, as the case required. If three pentameters were strung together and duly marked by a bracket, or if the alexandrine added a decorous variation, it was still true that "English poetry seemed bound in a ten-linked chain." But we need have no quarrel with what its master, Pope, called (in Dryden)

"The varying verse, the full resounding line,  
The long majestic march, the energy divine."

For the full resounding line we may be duly thankful, though the energy divine, in the Æschylean or the Shakespearean or the Shelleyan sense, is the one thing lacking.

Among the "dull sweets of rhyme," which Dryden by turns tasted and rejected, he gave us *stand: England; clangor: anger; Jehoshaphat: fate; come: doom; indignation: passion; scorn: return; choose: depose; break: weak; halves: knaves; fit: sweet; forth: mirth; pretence: prince; express: cease; rock: smoke; and* (consecutive) *state: treat; flash: dish; dress'd: feast*, — these last a pretty good illustration of the freedom in which he believed. Once he has *again: plain; at another time again: then*. This word has long had both rhyme-sounds, according to the exigencies of the sense.

Dryden's greatest rhyme-achievement — dwarfing the once-read dramas and the didactic-propagandist *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther*, is to be found in the two Saint Cecilia's Day odes, which, in their thought, onomatopœia, feminine rhymes, and rapidly changing measures, seem to overleap a hundred years and take their place in the poetry of the Romantic revival. Dryden's odes are modern in their very essence: while other poets were slavishly imitating classical models —



and were to do so for nearly a hundred years to come — Dryden was here as unfettered as Wordsworth or Keats.

Indeed, if ever a man was born too late and too early it was “glorious John.” Parts of his plays are unexcelled by the work of any Elizabethan dramatist save Shakespeare; and when reading them we seem to be “bêtwixt and between” the very charm of 1600 and all the freshness of 1800. Read, for instance, the passage in *Œdipus* giving Tiresias’ incantation of the ghost of Laius; or the song in *The Spanish Friar* beginning:

“Farewell, ungrateful traitor,  
Farewell, my perjured swain,  
Let never injured creature  
Believe a man again.  
The pleasure of possessing  
Surpasses all expressing,  
But ’t is too short a blessing  
And love too long a pain.”

Dryden, notwithstanding his rhyme-triumphs in two schools of composition, the didactic and the lyric, was at one time, in respect to one form of poetry, apparently inclined to join the company of the decriers of rhyme. In 1678 he wrote that he had “disencumbered” himself of it, finding blank verse more suitable to tragedy, — an unquestionable truth. Rhymed dramas like Dryden’s earlier plays were a passing fashion at the beginning of the last quarter of the seventeenth century. In brief, Dryden had defended rhyme for comedies because of its fitness for effective sallies or repartees; and for tragedies because it was farther removed from prose. But experience soon convinced him and the other best critics of the time — which, at Dryden’s death in 1700, was able to show but a few coarse comedians as the sole representatives of major English literature — that blank verse was the dignified vehicle for English dramatic expression. Rhyme, indispensable to the French stage, has never long been welcome to the English.

At the time (1663) when Milton’s work was at its height and Dryden’s had not yet reached its period of greatest productivity, — between the days of Shakespeare and those of Pope, — the rollicking rhymes of Butler, like some of the more serious verbal

music of Dryden, anticipated modern freedom. Butler was constrained by nothing save his own whims, and invented rhymes as he chose, or twisted them out because of the necessities of thought. *False: tails* was a good enough rhyme for him, and *sun: down* entirely satisfactory. Indeed, he evidently felt that part of the fun was the wrenching of sounds from their accustomed laws. His rattling octosyllables — “Hudibrastic” verse — were so well suited to his jocose plan that many years elapsed before this measure was turned once more to serious uses of narration or description. Butler’s frequent use of feminine rhymes — *inclined to: mind to; disparage: plum porridge*, etc., did for satirical poetry what Milton’s, in *L’Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, had done for idyllic.

The general freedom of rhyme-use between Butler and Gray may be illustrated by a few examples, chronologically arranged. Prior has *errs: cares; complaint: elephant*. Addison, *east: west; faint: pant*. Watts, *led: spread: shade*. Young, *great: complete*. Gay, *ermine: charming*. Pope, *toast: lost; devil: civil; remained: land; descant: per cent; mayors: wars; waves: receives; sour: poor; hair: sphere; feast: guest; air: star; boast: lost; rise: precipice; fry: jealousy; said: laid; said: head*. Seldom does he use such a rhyme as *side: subside*, but he is not afraid of it. His *come: room; Rome: dome; Rome: doom; Rome: come* — like Dryden’s *come: doom*, just mentioned — are reminders not only of an old pronunciation of *o* but of the coupling of different vowel-sounds in necessary words having few rhymes, a practice in vogue all the way from Shakespeare to Lowell.

Two things which Pope thought undesirable in the heroic couplet were, in his own words: “The repeating [*sic*] the same rhyme within four or six lines of each other, which tire the ear with too much of the like sound”; and “the too frequent use of alexandrins, which are never graceful, but where there is some majesty added to the verse by them, or when there cannot be found a word in them but what is absolutely needful.” His advice is better than his English.

Regarding the subject matter, even Pope clearly saw the evils into which the heroic couplet fell so easily and so often; and in the *Essay on Criticism* he denounced those versifiers who

“ring round the same unvaried chimes,  
 With sure returns of still-expected rhymes;  
 Where'er you find 'the cooling western breeze,'  
 In the next line it 'whispers through the trees.'”

Aside from *love*, *Rome*, etc., some other essential words have few rhymes, and therefore similarly sounding words must be forced to go in their company. Such a word is *blood*, which Dryden rhymes with *stood*; Butler with *stood*; Pope with *stood*, *good*, and *wood*; Gay with *wood*; Byron with *stood*; Scott with *stood*; Keble with *rude*; and Tennyson with *good*. *Wind* (noun) has few companions in sound, hence *wind*, in poetry said or sung. Such rhymes as those just cited led Mitford, in despair, to exclaim that “the harmony of English poetry, from Shakespeare to Cowper,” was in “danger of becoming shortly as problematical as that of Chaucer.”

Mitford incidentally gives us some interesting information concerning eighteenth-century pronunciation. To his ear “the middle sound of *a*, in *can*, *fallow*, *father*, *example*,” was the same. He pronounced *e* in *merchant*, *Derby*, *Hertford*, *Berkshire*, and *Berkeley* as *a* in *far*. Of these the four last survive in England, but none of the words is likely to appear in rhyme. Nearer to our subject is his allusion to “the diphthongal characters *ea*, *ei*, *ey*, as in *bear*, *heir*, *grey*.” To *journey* he gave the same sound as in *rough*, *young*; a pronunciation now dialectal and rare. More interesting is his charge that the poets of the eighteenth century were largely responsible for making *join* and *point*, for instance, rhyme with *fine* and *pint*. That the former was the deliberate use of the best poets of his time is clear. Pope has *line*: *join*; *join*: *divine*; *joined*: *mankind*; Shenstone, *entwin'd*: *joined*: *unkind*; Gray, *shine*: *join*; Cowley, *join*: *vine*; Dryden, *join*: *design*; *declined*: *joined*; Butler, *join*: *design*; Falconer, *join*: *line*; Addison, *find*: *join'd*; Beattie, *join*: *shine*. This is identity, not similarity, of sound, and proves the pronunciation, which, indeed, survived in poetry until Coleridge's *joined*: *mind*, Wordsworth's *joined*: *kind*, and Bulwer's *mind*: *enjoined*. Equally clear is Gray's *toil*: *smile*, fortified by Dryden's *defile*: *spoil*; Falconer's *soil*: *smile*; and Byron's *aisle*: *recoil* and *aisles*: *toils*. Byron, it will be remembered, was an admirer of Pope.

Other once perfect rhymes, now unpermissible, are Donne's *enter: venture* (*venter* is Yankee dialect to-day); Donne's *waste: wast*; Waller's *haste: last*; Dryden's *plac'd: last*; *cast: plac'd*; *unbought: draught*; Pope's *past: waste*; *away: sea*; Swift's *survey: tea*; Warton's *convey: sea*; Dryden's *way: sea*; Cowper's *survey: sea*; Moore's *sway: sea*; Gay's *display: sea*; *nature: satire*; *nature: creature*; Gray's *satire: nature* (*nater* is, of course, in full dialectal use to-day). A similar proof, by rhyme, of the existence of a now discarded (or but local) pronunciation is Halleck's *saw: hurrah*, in *Marco Bozzaris* (1827).

*Great* was long one of the uncertain words. Gay has *seat: great*; *great: cheat*; *conceit: great*. Young has *great: compete*. Pope's *state: great*, with Rowe's *seat: great*, led Johnson to say, in the plan of his dictionary: "Some words have two sounds which may be equally admitted as being equally defensible by authority" — a remark which has not lost its force.

A few rhymes which may here be noted, almost at random, are Thomson's *issued: brew'd*; Shenstone's *yield: field: wield: filled*; Akenside's *urn: mourn*; *year: share*; Goldsmith's *arms: warns*; and Warton's *come: tomb*; *eve: grave*.

The poems of Gray and Collins are the oases in the classical verse of the century. Their odes, and many of their other pieces, strongly show the prevalent influences of the day; but much of their work is touched by the romantic spirit. If Gray wrote Pindaric odes, he was also interested in Welsh and Norse themes and methods; and Collins was the author of *How Sleep the Brave* as well as the *Ode to Evening* — which, though ultra-classical and unrhymed, is thoroughly natural in sentiment.

Gray, rather than his predecessors, Davenant and Dryden, in his *Elegy* popularized the alternately rhyming iambic pentameter, thus combining dignified stability and easy variety in a way which was influential in shortening the reign of the couplet. Furthermore, since the measure is manifestly unsuitable for narrative, Gray did not hesitate to use run-on lines and run-on stanzas; in one instance a narrative stanza of the *Elegy* does not end even with a comma.

On the whole, Gray succeeded better when bound by frequently recurring rhymes than when, as in the Pindaric odes, he used



rhymes farther separated. Cowley's Pindaric strophes, so popular until Gray's time, were denounced by Johnson as concealing deficiencies, flattering laziness, and starting boys and girls to "write like Pindar"; but the irregularly rhymed and divided English ode, Pindaric or other, is much harder to produce than the heroic couplet, and has been less abused. In general, as we have seen, the English ear does not carry rhymes more than three lines apart; and even then they must appear at stated intervals. The rhymes of Wordsworth's great ode are sometimes forgotten before their companions are reached.

In the *Elegy* are 128 lines, of which 114 have rhymes that are still perfect (including *muse: strews*). *Toil: smile* was, as we have seen, perfect at the time. *Rove: love; borne: thorn*, would attract no attention in a modern poem. This leaves *withstood: blood; obscure: poor; beech: stretch*, and *abode: God*; of which none, probably, — with the possible exception of the second — was a perfect rhyme in Gray's day. Gray's ear did not object to the assonances *relies: requires: cries: fires*, in consecutive lines. In his sonnet *On the Death of Richard West* he has also in consecutive lines, *shine, fire, join, attire, repine, require, mine, expire*. If this was intentional, it shows that repeated assonances have become less pleasing to the English ear since Gray's time. In the *Elegy* "The breezy call of incense-breathing morn" is objectionable to some modern readers, but must have seemed musical to the author. The *day: lea: way: me* of the first stanza he at any rate allowed to stand; and the twentieth century takes pleasure at least in the internal alliterations and assonances

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,  
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me."

Most of Gray's rhymes call for no mention; among the exceptions are *men: complain: vain; cheer: bear: hear; car: bear*.

The ultimate purpose of rhyme of any kind — and of end-rhyme in all modern languages — is to give an added and pleasurable emphasis to the thought of the poet. Hence the rhyme-words should be the significant turning-places of the thought, or the climax to which it leads. An unusual illustration

of this fact is found in a statement once made to William Winter by Edmund Clarence Stedman, that it was his custom to select with care the particular form of verse that he designed to use, and sometimes to invent the rhymes and write them at the ends of the lines which they were to terminate, thus making a skeleton of a poem as a ground-work on which to build. Some poets have gone so far — among them the French de Banville<sup>1</sup> — as to declare that there can be but one right word for the rhyme-place, and that its use is not so much a matter of selection, on the singer's part, as of downright inspiration. Thus the American religious poet Jones Very felt that he was directly led by the Spirit of God to compose his sonnets in their existing form. Poetic practice is, of course, a refutation of such extreme views for many a writer of a genius far exceeding that of de Banville or Very has left rhyme-revisions on record. But in the most felicitous verse — and in direct proportion to its felicity — is to be found a rightness of word which goes far to leave on the hearer's mind the impression that nothing else would have sufficed. This rightness is especially necessary, and especially welcome, in terminational rhymes. Take, for instance, Collins' *Ode Written in MDCCXLVI*:

“How sleep the Brave, who sink to rest  
By all their Country's wishes blest!  
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,  
Returns to deck their hallow'd mould,  
She there shall dress a sweeter sod  
Than fancy's feet have ever trod.

“By fairy hands their knell is rung,  
By forms unseen their dirge is sung:  
There Honour comes, a pilgrim gray,  
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;  
And Freedom shall awhile repair  
To dwell a weeping hermit there!”

Perfection rests upon the whole; and it was not an accident that led Collins to use no rhyme that was not fit in thought and perfect in correspondence of sound. Here was no place for experimentation or uncertainty.

A similar verbal felicity may be found in parts of his *To*

<sup>1</sup> See page 19.

*Evening*, the last elaborate attempt at an unrhymed classical ode — a poem with many variant effects of alliteration, assonance, and tone-color, but without end-rhyme, though carefully written in stanzas of two iambic pentameters followed by two iambic trimeters. Here we have

“Now air is hush’d, save where the weak-eyed bat  
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,  
Or where the beetle winds  
His small but sullen horn,”

— very suggestive of the second stanza of the *Elegy*; “some wild and heathy scene”; “hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires,” with their “simple bell”; while *Evening*’s “dewy fingers draw the gradual dusky veil” — the same figure as that in the ode just quoted. But this experiment in rhymeless quasi-Horatian stanzas cannot be called successful, as regards its form. When listened to, the hearer does not distinguish it from blank verse, save that he feels that he is somehow losing the count of feet and the balance of lines. The accidental rhyme *vale: hail* of stanza 5 throws him off the track; and *scene: gleams* in stanza 8 and *all: drawl* in stanza 10 are no help. This is not hypercriticism; for a poem that does not make its scheme apparent is defective. Over and over again have the poets proved that while quantity sufficed in Greek and Latin, it does not in English; therefore other devices must be used to give the effect of finish and completeness. Yet, when all is said, the form of Collins’ interesting experiment is more poetically satisfying than that of Marvell’s *Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland*, correctly written in rhymed iambic tetrameters (two lines) followed by two rhymed iambic trimeters. The lines in the latter are too short for rhyme, and the effect is so jerky that the poem owes much of its endurance to the popular passage

“He nothing common did or mean  
Upon that memorable scene.”

The stanza

“Nature, that hateth emptiness,  
Allows of penetration less,  
And therefore must make room  
When greater spirits come ”

is not poetry at all; nor is

"And now the Irish are ashamed  
To see themselves in one year tamed."

The lesson of these two "Horatian" odes, taken together, one without rhyme and the other with, is that poetic words however arranged are better than prosy words arranged in perfect rhyme; and that, in English, rhyme cannot be added to a Horatian metre in such a manner as to retain either Latin or English beauty.

Johnson and Goldsmith went too far in their dislike of blank verse as being pedantic, or verse only to the eye, — which it certainly is not, in Milton or Tennyson; but there was truth in their opinion in so far as it applied to shorter lines.

Goldsmith's *fault: sought* is a good example of many words which have changed their pronunciation within a comparatively short time. The *New English Dictionary* says that *fault*, in Pope and Swift, rhymes with *thought*, *wrought*; and Johnson, 1755, says that in conversation the *l* is generally suppressed. In many dialects the pronunciation is still (fōt). When French introduced the word from Latin it discarded the *l*, and so did the imitating English; but both languages re-introduced it in the fifteenth century.

The heroic couplet came down the years to Rogers, who died in 1855, but who, notwithstanding his life in the nineteenth century and his "*Mine be a cot beside a hill*," belongs to the classical rather than the romantic school. For the purpose of the present discussion his oftentimes excellent verse needs no examination. Nor does that of Crabbe, which is mainly prose, whether its nominal form be blank verse, couplets, triplets, or stanzas. Perhaps, of all poets considered eminent by anybody, Crabbe is the most conspicuous example of the dangerous tendency of the heroic couplet to lead to a twisting of the sense for the sake of the rhyme. Take, at random, his observations on books, in which every other line is so ground out that one hears the squeak of the crank. Books, says he,

"soothe the grieved, the stubborn they chastise,  
Fools they admonish, and confirm the wise;  
Their aid they yield to all: they never shun  
The man of sorrow, nor the wretch undone;



Unlike the hard, the selfish, and the proud,  
 They fly not sullen from the suppliant crowd;  
 Nor tell to various people various things,  
 But show to subjects what they show to kings."

Here "chastise," "shun," "crowd," and "things" are the obedient followers of "wise," "undone," "proud," and "kings"; only the last line leaving any sense of that moderate talent which, so often in the eighteenth century, used to assume the garb of genius.<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, though many later poets — even including Holmes and Lowell — have used it, the great period of the heroic couplet ended with Goldsmith. No lovelier or more triumphant *finale* could be given than that afforded in *The Deserted Village*, from its first line to its last. Nor is it, as some have said, a composite of pensive reflection and political economy; there is mere poetry in such lines as

"No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,  
 But, choked with sedges, works its weedy way;  
 Along thy glades, a solitary guest,  
 The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;  
 Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,  
 And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.  
 Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,  
 And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall."

<sup>1</sup> Crabbe "was always ready to write 'meanly,' in a kind of rhyming prose, — if the phrase is allowable, — in which not the prose but the rhyme seems to be the intruder. He could write —

"Mamma look'd on with thoughts to these allied;  
 She felt the pleasure of reflected pride";

or even thus —

"But how will Bloomer act  
 When he becomes acquainted with the fact?"

Much of the meanness of such passages is due to their thick and lumbering rhymes. *Act, fact; all, scrawl; aunt, grant; flood, mud!* The whole weight of a couplet lies upon its rhymes, and Crabbe does not mind making the worst of them." — OLIVER ELTON, in *Blackwood's Magazine*, January, 1909.

## IX

### ROMANTIC RHYME

THE eighteenth century in English poetry was a time of comment, the nineteenth, of creation. To the eighteenth belonged reflection, obvious description, rhetoric, the heroic couplet, and formality of rhyme; to the nineteenth, imagination, world-wide curiosity, originality, stanzas of every kind, and rhymes of the utmost freedom. At the beginning of the romantic movement came Burns, who cared not for form, and Blake, who knew not form. Furthermore, at the time of the appearance of the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge, in 1798 — that “discovery of a new world in English poetry” — the influence of the old border ballads was powerful: poems in which the expression of passionate feeling was everything, and stresses, line-lengths, alliterations, assonances, and end-rhymes of every sort merely means toward the one desired end.

Cowper, to whom blank verse and rhyme were almost indifferent, spoke of “the clock-work tintinnabulum” of the latter; but the author of *The Loss of the Royal George* certainly knew how to employ it with a directly musical effectiveness which might have been envied by any of the romantic poets. The old balladists used no freer rhyme than the *overset: complete* of the poem just named, or the *plain: man; man: again; and thought: lot* of *The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk*.

In Blake, at the very start of the romantic movement, freedom was almost anarchy. Mrs. Browning might have envied his *lamb: name; lambs: hands; tomb: come; song: among; valley: melancholy; dawn: scorn; blessing: ceasing; blossom: bosom; dreadful: heedful; nest: beast. Vault: fraught; and poor: door* were possibly good rhymes in his day, but *field: beheld* could hardly have been. Once he used *read: reed*.

Blake harked back to his favorite Ossian, and anticipated not only the Coleridge of 1798, but also the Walt Whitman of 1855. Between semi-rhythmical prose and the pure lyric he ranged at will, his language being as kaleidoscopic as his thought. While reading him we think now of the King James' Bible, now of Swedenborg, now of Emerson. His visions were as far-reaching as Dante's, but of Dante's almost mathematical self-control he had hardly a trace, changing suddenly from lucidity to utter obscurity.

Like the old balladists, he was fond of seven-stressed loose movements, but, unlike them, he was willing to omit rhyme. His *America* is a characteristic example of this measure. As regards thought-rhyme, no better illustration can be found in his works than the five lines of the inscription to his *Ghost of Abel* (1822), which W. M. Rossetti calls "a compendious example of the union of quaintness, profundity, and mysticism which the prophetic books exhibit."

"To Lord Byron in the Wilderness. — What dost thou here, Elijah?

Can a poet doubt the visions of Jehovah?

Nature has no outline, but Imagination has;

Nature has no time, but Imagination has;

Nature has no supernatural, and dissolves; Imagination is eternity."

In Burns the influence of dialect was added to that of the ballads. He evidently fretted under the trammels of exact rhyme. Thus — to choose almost at random — we have *morn-ing: wand'ring; returning: morning; beauty: duty: true to; feather: beaver; farthing: regarding; determine: farming; mind: syne; befriend me: sustain me; wander: slumber; money: upon me; beastie: breastie; hasty: chase thee; dominion: union: companion; nibble: trouble. His eye: joy; untried: enjoy it; and soil: toil: vile: while: aisle*, are the correct eighteenth-century pronunciation, already noted in Gray and others. *Creature: nature; ardour: farther; and farther: regard her* remind us of the antiquity of pronunciations still surviving.

The Spenserian stanza of *The Cottar's Saturday Night* was of course common property; it had been used by Shenstone, Thomson, and Akenside before Burns, as it was by Byron, Keats, Shelley, and Tennyson after him. On the whole, it

proved less suitable for a folk-idyl than Goldsmith's heroics or Whittier's octosyllabics. The peculiar "Burns metre" of *To a Louse on a Lady's Bonnet*, *To a Field Mouse*, etc., is first found in the fifteenth century; it is a wearisome measure to all but Burns enthusiasts, and has been discarded save by his avowed imitators.

Wordsworth, though more methodical than most of his contemporaries, did not hesitate to use such rhymes as *echo: cuckoo*; *come: home*; *weather: hither*; *stroke: clock: shock*; and *kettle: metal*. He unquestionably dropped his *g* in words ending in *-ing*, as, witness *daring: pairing: war in* (*Hint from the Mountains*), and *sullen: pulling* (*Ode on Immortality*). Yankees are supposed to be peculiar in the omission of this guttural-terminant; but its lack is equally noticeable in the speech of Englishmen of culture. Wordsworth probably sounded four consecutive lines of the *Ode*

"O evil day! if I were sullen  
While earth herself is adornin'  
This sweet May mornin';  
And the children are pullin'  
On every side  
In a thousand valleys far and wide,  
Fresh flowers."

Neither was Scott a purist in these matters, as he showed in the *Helvellyn: yelling* of his well-known poem. Wordsworth's rhyme for the same mountain was *dwelling*. Another Wordsworthian bit of verbal music is *robin: sobbing*. On the other hand his *dames: Thames* makes the American wonder whether he has carefully been mispronouncing the name of the river, all these years.

The highest attainment of Wordsworth in blank verse is the final passage of *The Recluse*, which, in idea, is perhaps the mountain-peak of poetic aspiration in English. Among his rhymed poems, notwithstanding the majesty of some of the sonnets, and the new music and the new thought of the best nature-lyrics, the *Ode on Immortality* is supreme. In it most of the rhymes are normal. *Sea: jollity* (especially as it comes in the middle of *gay: May: holiday*) marks the end of the



eighteenth-century *e* in the first word, which survived as late as Cowper's *survey: sea*. *Call: festival: coronal: all*, and *festival: funeral* (compare Milton's *festival: hall*) show the beauty of lingering pronunciation which was so clearly to be displayed, again and again, by Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats. He who does not read the greater English romantic poets almost with a drawl at times, loses much of their music. *Warm: arm; one: upon: gone; come: home; splendid: attended; song: tongue: long; belie: immensity; sympathy: be; eye: mortality; immortality: by* (a rhyme never disused since Shakespeare's day); *creature: nature; weather: hither* — all these illustrate the fact that a reasonable similarity of sound was the only thing asked by the rhymers.

Some lines are left unrhymed; and one of them, I think, is "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," though *boy* comes two lines below and *joy* two lines farther on. The length of the lines varies from two feet to six; the greatest number of lines between rhymes is six.

Wordsworth does not object to *forgetfulness: nakedness*; in which, as in almost every English rhyme of the sort, there is a pairing of ideas back of the last syllables, which satisfies the reader as well as a sound-rhyme. Nor does he take any pains to avoid assonances in adjoining lines — *feet: repeat: gleam: dream*, etc.

A late survival of identical rhyme is *one: won* (*The Happy Warrior*).

Sir Walter Scott is significant in the history of rhyme for two reasons: he searched out, popularized, and made models of, the old ballads of the border, and he made the rhymed octosyllabic couplet (iambic tetrameter) a more important poetic vehicle than it had ever been. In variety and melody his songs were unsurpassed by any others of the romantic school. He caught the spirit of the old ballads and in some ways improved upon their form, — as for instance, in the return, rather than refrain, of "Oh Brignall banks are wild and fair." Swift fusion of thought and sound has never, in English poetry, been better illustrated than in this poem, in which perfect and imperfect end-rhymes, internal rhymes, assonances, and thought-rhymes

are combined in such a way that the very imperfections of the verse leave the desired impression of irresistible speed.

The four-stressed rhyming couplets of *Marmion*, *The Lady of the Lake*, and *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* were made by Scott to seem almost the indispensable means of combining vivid narration and idyllic description. If others have not been able to repeat his success, as, indeed, he himself failed to do in *Rokeby*, it remains the more significant.<sup>1</sup>

An unusual rhyme-arrangement (aaabbbccc) was effectively used by Scott in the *Lament in The Lady of the Lake*. A curious rhyme in the same poem is

"And now to issue from the glen,  
No pathway meets the wanderer's ken,  
Unless he climb, with footing nice,  
A far-projecting *precipice*."

<sup>1</sup> Oliver Wendell Holmes, in a short essay under the attractive title *The Physiology of Versification*, presents the thesis that as there are, for the average man, twenty inspirations of breath and eighty heart-pulsations per minute, the octosyllabic measure of Scott and others is the normal English line (with twenty lines and eighty accents to the minute), the five-stressed iambic pentameter being too long and the hexameter worse yet. "It is plain, therefore, that if one reads twenty lines in a minute, and naturally breathes the same number of times during that minute, he will pronounce one line to each expiration, taking advantage of the pause at its close for inspiration." On the other hand, in the ten-syllable or heroic line of Pope's Homer, "if a breath is allowed to each line the respiration will be longer and slower than natural, and a sense of effort and fatigue will soon be the consequence." To the common metre of the hymn-books he allows "a line to each expiration," which makes "exceedingly easy reading." The twelve-syllable line is "too much for one expiration and not enough for two," and is therefore "almost intolerable." Again, "one can hardly doubt that Spenser breathed habitually more slowly than Prior, and that Anacreon had a quicker respiration than Homer." But "these are only suggestions to be considered and tested; the relations of verse to the respiratory rhythm will be easily verified and extended by any who may care to take the trouble."

Now, Dr. Holmes was not only one of the most naturally lyrical of American poets, but also an accomplished physiologist; so that his conclusions are entitled to more respect than those of the layman in verse and medicine; but all that I will do is to ask the reader to utter the lines mentioned and see if he can, without inconvenience, even force himself to inhale and exhale according to Dr. Holmes's plan. He will be much more likely to read two lines of Gray's *Elegy*, or three of *Marmion*, with one breath, while a single inspiration will be enough for the fifteen-syllable lines of *Locksley Hall*.

*War* is a necessary word with few rhymes, therefore Scott rhymes it with *far*; Gray and Wordsworth with *afar*; Cowper with *are*; Coleridge with *far*; and Byron with *car*.

In Scott and the romantic poets generally, final *y* has no fixed sound, being either the sound in *high* or that in *see*, as the rhyme demands; thus Scott has *eye: vacancy*; Hogg *e'e: sea*; Byron and Wordsworth *eye: Emily*; Keats *key: minstrelsy*; Rogers *eye: minstrelsy*. As I have already said, in English — unlike Italian or French — the variety of pronunciation, and also of rhyme-pairing, has always been so great as to make it difficult to prove a given pronunciation by rhyme-uses at a given time.

“The master of masters, who is Coleridge” (Swinburne) is a good illustration of the liberty with which the greater English poets have used many means toward the one result of the enrichment of the world by imaginative expression. He was influential because of his insistence upon that old freedom which he mistakenly regarded as a discovery. “The metre of *Christabel*,” said he in the preface to that poem, “is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four.” This was nothing but the “tumbling verse” of the sixteenth century, mentioned by King James.

Such intentional freedom was not accompanied by extraordinary variations from rhyme-usage. We have *forced: burst*; *gusht: dust*; *heart: desert*; *brow: glow*; *yesternight: knight*; but as a rule Coleridge’s ear seemed naturally to guide him to those rhymes which fastidious usage calls “perfect.” It would be hard to find, in a poem of equal length, a less criticisable list than those in *Love*, which, in order, are as follows: *frame: flame*; *hour: tower*; *eve: Genevieve*; *knight: light*; *Genevieve: grieve*; *story: hoary*; *grace: face*; *brand: land*; *tone: own*; *grace: face*; *knight: night*; *shade: glade*; *bright: knight*; *band: land*; *vain: brain*; *away: lay*; *ditty: pity*; *Genevieve: eve*; *throng: long*; *shame: name*; *stept: wept*; *embrace: face*; *art: heart*; *pride: bride*. But, though sparingly, this leader did not hesitate to

use "the half-rhyme, or incomplete rhyme, which has an irresistible charm." Taste, after all, is the arbiter of beauty.

Southey's *Lodore* illustrates that prodigality in rhyme-effects which was a characteristic of the romantic revival, and which was to appear later in the humorous work of Barham, Mahony, and Lowell. In general, unusual or forced rhymes, such as his *gentleman: cane*, or *care I: Mary*, are suitable only for light or jocose work, or for semi-satirical poems like Byron's *Don Juan*.

George Ticknor traces the "riotous waste of rhymes" in Southey's *Curse of Kehama* — which Southey himself called "crypto-rhymes," "uniting the advantage of rhyme with the strength and freedom of blank verse in a manner peculiar to itself" — back to the Spanish poet Garcilasso's rhymes between the end of one line and the middle of the next:

"Albanio, si tu mal comunicáras  
Con otro, que pensáras, que tu péna  
Juzgara como agéna, o que esto fuego," etc.

Concerning this Ticknor says: "Wherever the rhyme is quite obvious the effect is not good, and where it is little noticed the lines take rather the character of blank verse."

A rhyme in Campbell of a sort not noted hitherto is *Achaians: defiance*.

Lamb, in his few verses, chiefly deserves notice because of the surprising triumph of *The Old Familiar Faces* — one of the few admirable unrhymed lyrics in the language, with a nobly used refrain, and written in melodious six-stressed measure. The rhymes in his tender lyric *Hester* are free; thus he gives *endeavor: together; spirit: inherit; rule: cool: school; blest her: Hester. Dash: wash*, elsewhere, is one of his rhymes that seems peculiarly objectionable, notwithstanding our general historic plea for freedom.

It is natural to find in Moore, by intent, the dropping of *g's*: —

"I have found out a gift for my Erin,  
A gift that will surely content her; —  
Sweet pledge of a love so endearing!  
Five millions of bullets I've sent her," —



or an occasional *laurel: moral*, etc.; but in general he was not unconventional. Regarding the larger question of his music, I cannot do better than quote from his latest biographer:

"It is Moore's great distinction that he brought into English verse something of the variety and multiplicity of musical rhythms. When the *Irish Melodies* began to appear, it is no wonder that readers should have been dazzled by the skill with which a profusion of metres were handled; and the poet showed himself even more inventive in rhythms than in stanzas. The most curious part of the matter is that Moore was really importing into English poetry some of the characteristics of a literature which he did not know. He had not a word of Gaelic, and (like O'Connell) desired to see it die out. He observes that Spanish alone of European metrical systems employs 'assonantic' instead of consonantic rhyme, though he was bred in a country where rhyme of this order had been brought to an extraordinary pitch of perfection. But he based his work upon Irish tunes, composed in the primitive manner, before music was divorced from poetry. One may say, virtually, that in fitting words to these tunes, here produced in English the rhythms of Irish folk-song." <sup>1</sup>

Byron's management of the Spenserian stanza, in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, was marked by a freedom of rhythm and rhyme distinctly modern, as compared with that of all previous users of the stanza. The *ottava rima* of *Don Juan* was made to lend itself to jocosity and satire of every kind, written almost as an *improvisatore* might have done. Such rhymes as *Acropolis: Constantinople is: metropolis*; *laureate: Tory at: are ye at*; *intellectual: hen-pecked you all*; *appearance: year hence*, may be taken as specimens of hundreds. To Byron's conscious and unconscious imitators, during the Byronic period, they were a constant model or temptation. Tame beside them appeared his *sword: lord*; *appendix: index*; *faith: death*; *mood: blood*; *athwart: part*; *none: stone*; *gone: sun*; *beneath: breathe*; *wolf: gulf*; *owl: soul*; *he: Nineveh* (suggestive of Rossetti).

In particular, Byron deserves praise for the new melody he drew from feminine rhymes in English. The following (distinctly,

<sup>1</sup> STEPHEN GWYNNE: *Thomas Moore* (*English Men of Letters* series).

a forerunner of Swinburne) is in itself enough to confute the old idea that they are necessarily trivial:

“We sate down and wept by the waters  
Of Babel, and thought of the day  
When our foe, in the hue of his slaughters  
Made Salem’s high places his prey;  
And ye, oh her desolate daughters,  
Were scattered all weeping away.”

Still more anticipatory of Swinburne’s most characteristic devices of metre, alliteration, and alternate arrangement of feminine rhymes in an eight-line stanza are the *Stanzas to Augusta*, of which I quote the first and the last:

“Though the day of my destiny’s over,  
And the star of my fate hath declined,  
Thy soft heart refused to discover  
The faults which so many could find;  
Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,  
It shrunk not to share it with me,  
And the love which my spirit hath painted  
It never hath found but in thee.”

“From the wreck of the past, which hath perished,  
Thus much I at least may recall,  
It hath taught me that what I most cherished  
Deserved to be dearest of all:  
In the desert a fountain is springing,  
In the wide waste there still is a tree,  
And a bird in the solitude singing  
Which speaks to my spirit of thee.”

The aptness of rhyme and stanza in *The Destruction of Sennacherib*; *Oh talk not to me of a name great in story*; the Shelleyan *There be none of beauty’s daughters*; *There’s not a joy the world can give*; or *When we two parted*, shows that Byron, with all his superficiality and limitations, left English verse much richer than he found it.

Shelley was one of the larger influences toward rhyme-freedom in the nineteenth century. In his rhymes, more than in those of the majority of poets, we are reminded of the necessity of that slow pronunciation which gives full value to each sound. If rapidly read, *To a Skylark* — which may be called the *credo* of the romantic school — loses half its beauty. Take, for instance, the first and fourteenth stanzas:

"Hail to thee, blithe spirit !  
 Bird thou never wert  
 That from heaven or near it,  
 Pourest thy full heart  
 In profuse strains of unpremeditated art."

"Chorus hymeneal  
 Or triumphal chaunt  
 Matched with thine would be all  
 But an empty vaunt —  
 A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want."

Again a kind of lingering lusciousness of utterance seems to be demanded by, and to inhere in, such rhymes as *intense: omnipresence; dread: enteréd; floods: solitudes; clear: traveller: hair; song: strung; stone: frown; appear: despair: bare; pursuing: ruin; higher: fire; not: blot: thought: what; standard: wandered; ray: array; motion: emotion.*

Another element in Shelley's rhymes is a silvery clearness of sound which seems to give new value to consonants, not only in such obvious places as

"Sound of vernal showers  
 On the twinkling grass,  
 Rain-awakened flowers,  
 All that ever was  
 Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass,"

but in such a stanza as

"Swiftly walk over the western wave,  
 Spirit of Night !  
 Out of the misty eastern cave  
 Where, all the long and lone daylight,  
 Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear  
 Which make thee terrible and dear, —  
 Swift be thy flight !"

In this poem — *To the Night* — alliteration, assonance, and end-rhyme are so blended that the reader scarcely notices where one or another of them is introduced.

Although, in such a line as the fourth of the stanza just quoted, Shelley never hesitates to alter a final accent for the sake of an effective rhyme, his feminine rhymes are usually unwrenched from their normal accents. Thus in *The Flight of Love*, the feminine rhymes, in order, are *shattered: scattered; broken:*

*spoken; splendour: render; dirges: surges; mingled: singled; bewailest: frailest; rock thee: mock thee; rafter: laughter.* The very rhymes themselves, without the rest of the poem, remind us how strong was Shelley's influence upon many later nineteenth-century poets. After him, at any rate, nobody could say that the feminine rhyme was inconsistent with seriousness, dignity, beauty, or even melancholy. By demanding freedom in all matters of accent, number of syllables in the line, rhyme-sound, and rhyme-arrangement, Shelley, not less than the great leader Coleridge, left in the minds of subsequent English poets the thought that the wing of rhyme, like that of Love in Campbell's poem,

"moult when caged and captured;  
Only free, he soars enraptured."

In *Adonais* are six identical rhymes. *The Cloud* is a comparatively early example of copious internal rhyme.

To the student who would get the quintessence of Shelley's methods as poet, versifier, and rhymers, I commend the lines beginning "Life of life, thy lips enkindle" (Voice in the Air, Singing," in *Prometheus Unbound*, II, v, which Palgrave calls "Hymn to the Spirit of Nature"<sup>1</sup>); or *To Jane*.

The rhymes of Keats are strongly illustrative of romantic freedom. Take *St. Agnes' Eve* as an example: we find *Madelaine: divine* and also *Madeline: unseen; was: grass; cavalier: elsewhere; foul: soul; beyond: bland; moon: crone; ears: bears; secrecy: privacy.* In the *Ode to a Nightingale* are *die: ecstasy; abroad: sod; path: hath.* In the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* are *Arcady: ecstasy; on: tone; priest: drest; unheard: endear'd; moon: return.* In the *Ode to Psyche* are *too: adieu; hierarchy: sky; none: moan.* In *To Autumn* are *trees: bees: cease.* In the *Ode on Melancholy* are *yewberries: mysteries; be: drowsily; owl: soul; peonies: eyes.* Some other rhymes are *essences: lees; innumerable: tell; gone: known; dead: mead; prest: amethyst; moon: thereon; gourd: curd; form: worm: deform; Maia: Baiae.*

<sup>1</sup> A surprising thing is that Palgrave omitted this in later editions of *The Golden Treasury*, by the advice of Tennyson.



In the stanza arrangements of these odes Keats follows neither the Horatian, the Pindaric, nor any familiar irregular method; but, while retaining the strict stanza form, with a uniform number of feet in each line and of lines in each stanza, varies the rhyme-arrangement at will. Thus in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* the arrangement is as follows:— stanza 1, *ababcdedce*; stanza 2, *ababcdeced*; stanza 3, *ababcdedce*; stanza 4, *ababcdedce*; stanza 5, *ababcdedce*.

Keats took no pains to avoid assonance in adjoining rhymed lines. Thus we have in the *Ode to Psyche*, *trees: steep: bees: sleep; brain: name: feign: same*. After patient study of assonance from the earliest to the latest times, one must reach the conclusion that it is now a nearly negligible thing, in the verse-art of most English poets. It does not occur often enough, or regularly enough, to give evidence that it has frequently been prized as a beauty; nor, on the other hand, is it sedulously avoided. Keats evidently enjoyed it, especially when a languorous effect was sought.<sup>1</sup> Gifford thought that many of Keats's images in *Endymion* looked as though they had been suggested by the rhymes themselves. "Rhyme," said he, "may incline the balance"; but the poet's art lies "in making the deflection [to the necessities of rhyme and metre] as little conspicuous as possible."

A noteworthy element in Keats's use of the rhyming couplet is the essential unimportance of the rhyme, oftentimes, as a marker of sense. In the famous opening lines of *Endymion*, for instance, the running-over is so constant that the rhymes become only a sort of undertone of agreeable music.

One of the most beautiful of thought-rhyme cadences, and at the same time one of the most obvious illustrations of tone-color, is the well-known end of stanza 7 and beginning of stanza 8 of the *Ode to a Nightingale*:

"Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

"Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
To toll me back from thee to my sole self."

<sup>1</sup> See page 30 *sqq.*

This repeated word *forlorn*, on which Keats so finely dwelt, suggests a brief mention of a large subject. Tone-color is an unquestionable thing, and one closely connected with rhyme. Some of the "symbolists" have gone so far as to connect particular sounds with particular colors. Such a word as *forlorn* possibly suggests purple or blue, as such a word as *splendid* may suggest the glitter of bright hues; but those who pursue the inquiry soon get into the region where no two persons agree as to facts or fancies.

Of course there is a difference in color between Poe's line — so much admired by Mr. Andrew Lang — "The viol, the violet, and the vine," and Browning's "Gr-r-r — there, go, my heart's abhorrence." Equally of course there are onomatopoetic words like *whizz*, *bang*, *thud*, and a hundred more. *Boom*, for instance, contains the three sounds, in order, attending the firing of a cannon. But we do not go very far before we reach words which, melodious or not in themselves, strongly suggest inherent ideas. *Dark*, to take the first one that comes to mind, is sweetly musical as well as pictorially impressive; and it would be easy to found a scheme of tone-color on it alone. But, unfortunately, *mark* is still more musical, and yet, because of its meaning, destitute of tone-color effects. Nor in *stark* has the explosive any function. *Bark* (ship) and *bark* (of a dog) depend wholly on their meanings for any result on the mind. *Hark* might be selected as being completely unified in sound and sense, while *lark* also suggests tonality; but *park*, beginning with a smart labial-explosive, has no onomatopoetic power. Furthermore, while *ah* may perhaps be closer to a purple effect than *see*, no two writers on the subject, from Lord Bacon to Stephane Mallarmé, will agree on the color-labels to attach to any two sounds in any language. Clearly, "the subject remains to be investigated."

Poe's statement as to the way in which *The Raven* was built up is well known; and Walter Crane, in his *Reminiscences*, says that Tennyson read his own poetry aloud in a deep voice, in a way that reminded one of his description, in the *Morte d'Arthur*, of the manner in which Everard Hall

"read, mouthing out his hollow o's and a's,  
Deep-chested music."

It is interesting to see how many of the most enduringly popular songs of England and America, for the past hundred years, have had, in title or refrain, the long vowels and liquids that make the most sonorous rhymes. Take, for instance, those bringing in the thought and utterance of the word "old": Beginning with *Auld Lang Syne* and *Auld Robin Gray*, we have *The Old Folks at Home*, *The Old Oaken Bucket*, *Old Uncle Ned*, *My Old Kentucky Home*, *Tenting on the Old Camp Ground*, and many others. Long *o* is the dominant sound of *Ben Bolt*, *Home, Sweet Home*, *The Last Rose of Summer*, and Tennyson's *Sweet and Low*. The similar *au* is the note of *Annie Laurie*. Liquids and long vowels dominate *The Land o' the Leal*, *Drink to me only with thine eyes*, *Flow gently, sweet Afton*, and *The Harp that once through Tara's halls. Hard times, hard times, come again no more* is one of the many songs depending upon the most effective single refrain in English. "No more — all hell is writ in those two words"; but they may also be turned into a thought of triumphant mastery over present woe.

Thomas Hood, who may be called the last of the romantic school proper, was a minor poet who wrote two enduring masterpieces of melody. *The Bridge of Sighs* stands alone in the anthology of the nineteenth century. One of its features — a deliberate use of assonance — shows that Hood was an exception to the general remark just made on that subject. There can be no question of the intention, or of the success, of *garments: cerements; constantly: instantly; evidence: eminence: providence*. Among the end-rhymes are *humbly: dumbly; humanly: womanly; dishonor: on her; casement: basement: amazement*.

An early example of the repetend is

"Loop up her tresses  
Escaped from the comb,  
Her fair auburn tresses;  
Whilst wonderment guesses  
Where was her home?"

Hood's *Past and Present* — in its different way not less valuable than *The Bridge of Sighs* — is an excellent example of a poem that rhymes throughout in both ways: in thought and in corresponding expression. An apparent indication that it was

rapidly written is found in the imperfect internal rhyme in the next-to-the-last line of the third stanza:

"And summer pools could hardly cool  
The fever on my brow."

The consecutive *high : sky : joy : boy* of the last stanza indicates that in Hood's day the *ai* sound of *joy*, etc., no longer existed.<sup>1</sup>

Hood, by the way, once produced what is a strong candidate — even when we remember the later cacophonies of the Brownings — for the place of the worst rhyme (not jocosely intended) in the language. It occurs in his imaginative poem *The Elm Tree*, evidently written under the influence of Coleridge:

"The pines — those old gigantic pines,  
That writhe — recalling soon  
The famous human group that writhes  
With snakes in wild festoon —  
In ramous wrestlings interlaced,  
A forest *Laocoon*."

<sup>1</sup> A parody is a sort of elaborated rhyme, in which there is a series of contrasts between the ideas of the one poem and those of the other, place by place. Thus Miss Carolyn Wells begins her parody of Hood's *Past and Present*:

"I remember, I remember  
The flat where I was born:  
The little air-shaft where the sun  
Could not peep in at morn;"

and ends it with

"I live in first-floor chambers now,  
With nothing to annoy,  
But still I'm farther off from heaven  
Than when I was a boy."



## X

### MODERN RHYME

INFLUENCES in poetry cannot infallibly be traced;

“For who has sight so keen and strong  
That it can follow the flight of song?”

But after Wordsworth came Bryant; after Shelley Poe; and after Keats Tennyson. Bryant in turn affected the youthful Longfellow, until he came under the power of Heine; nor would the pre-Raphaelite school of English poets have been quite the same had Tennyson never written *Mariana*, *The Sisters*, and *St. Agnes' Eve*.

Neither can schools of poetry be neatly assigned to chronological limits. Rogers, who may be considered the last survival of the eighteenth-century school, died as late as 1855; Wordsworth was still poet-laureate in 1850; and Hunt, whom the *Quarterly Review*, in its famous onslaught on Keats, had declared to be much superior to him, though possessing all his characteristic faults, survived until the eve of the American Civil War.

The first American poem to win and retain a place in the history of English literature was Bryant's *Thanatopsis* — in every way a dignified piece of blank verse. But when it originally appeared (in *The North American Review* for September, 1817) it was in a form very different from that in which it has so long been known. It began with four four-line iambic pentameter stanzas, rhymed *abab*. Then came, by an abrupt change, in blank verse to the end, the germ of the poem as we have it at present. In this original shape the now famous beginning and ending were lacking; the rhymed stanzas were weak; and between them and the added blank verse there was no more unity of form than would have been shown had a page of Gray's *Elegy* been com-

bined with a page of Blair's *Grave*, as constituting a single poem.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the earlier and less important poems of Longfellow, both in rhyme and in blank verse, were, as had been said, immediately affected by the work of Bryant. Longfellow's was always a receptive mind; and when, before he was twenty, he was beginning his poetical career, Bryant loomed large on the American literary horizon. But Longfellow soon turned to the kind of work by which he is best known, and which does not in the least suggest his eminent predecessor.

It is interesting to note that no poet of rank, since the dismal days of the Elizabethan anti-rhymers, so extensively and so successfully experimented in other unrhymed measures than blank verse. *To an Old Danish Song-Book* (trochaic), *The Grave* (translated from Old English), *Tegner's Drapa* ("in the spirit of the old Norse poetry"), *The Children of the Lord's Supper* (hexameter), and other translated or original pieces, showed his fondness for such work before the two long poems

<sup>1</sup> The rhymed introduction, as originally printed, was as follows:

#### "THANATOPSIS

"Not that from life, and all its woes  
 The hand of death shall set me free;  
 Not that this head shall then repose  
 In the low vale most peacefully.

"Ah, when I touch time's farthest brink,  
 A kinder solace must attend;  
 It chills my very soul to think  
 On that dread hour when life must end.

"In vain the flattering verse may breathe  
 Of ease from pain and rest from strife;  
 There is a sacred dread of death  
 Inwoven with the strings of life.

"This bitter cup at first was given  
 When angry justice frown'd severe,  
 And 't is th' eternal doom of heaven  
 That man must view the grave with fear.

"Yet a few days, and thee  
 The all-beholding sun shall see no more" . . . etc.

The poem closed with the broken line

"And make their bed with thee."

by which his fame was so widely spread: *Evangeline* and *Hiawatha*. The hexameters of *Evangeline*, with some occasional roughness, proved to have a fitness for idyllic description not discovered by previous experimenters in a verse-form that was, and is, generally unsuitable for English use.<sup>1</sup> Its employment by Longfellow as the vehicle (in *The Courtship of Miles Standish*) for detailed humor we now see to have been a mistake; indeed, humor was never one of Longfellow's strongest powers. The four-stressed trochaics of *Hiawatha*, with their fitness for the parallelisms and repetitions so germane to the Indian mind and so advantageous in a poem needing to include explanatory translations, proved to be, as Longfellow said when he hit on the metre while reading the *Kalevala*, exactly suitable for the designed purpose.

Longfellow's fondness for freeing himself from the fetters of rhyme also appeared in some of his rhymed work; for instance, in parts of *The Saga of King Olaf*, where the movement sometimes dominates the technically rhyming syllables. Of all Longfellow's unrhymed poems the best is *The Bells of Lynn*, with its melodious refrain. In his finest lyric of all, — *My Lost Youth*, — though the poem itself is otherwise rhymed throughout, he found a prose recurrence ready to his hand, constituting one of the most effective thought-markers to be found in modern verse.

When Emerson, the prophet and poet of individualism, idealism, and optimism, wished to preach or portray with special conciseness, he fell naturally into a rhythmical form of expression. Writing, as he always did, "for thought, and not praise," he was careless concerning the number of stresses in the line, or the nature and arrangement of rhymes. Few poets have used a greater variety of ilits. Like the old *improvisatori*, he chanted until he had sung his song. Sometimes he was as regular as in the *Concord Hymn*; sometimes as loose as in the *Earth-Song of Hamatreya*. The music of *Good-Bye*, or *The Rhodora*, is so

<sup>1</sup> Swinburne declared himself unable to scan Arnold's hexameters, and said: "At best what ugly bastards of verse are these self-styled hexameters! how human tongues or hands could utter or could write them except by way of burlesque improvisation I could never imagine, and never shall."

unquestionable that we are left certain that Emerson's roughness in verse was due either to indifference to externals or to a sense of satisfaction in Saxon straightforwardness of expression. Excessive strength sometimes pleases by its very force, just as undue mellifluousness cloyes.

Thus the rhyme-uses of the leader of the Transcendental school of American poets were free in the extreme — freer, on the whole, than those of his associates and followers. Of all the school, Jones Very was the truest master of form, and the only one who could be trusted to write a first-rate sonnet. The strength of *The Dial* contributors lay in prose; deeply influenced by Coleridge, there was no Coleridge among them. Yet two bits from *The Dial*, aside from Emerson's contributions, have justly passed into the collections of familiar quotations, and both are rhymed. One is Cranch's

"Thought is deeper than all speech,  
Feeling deeper than all thought;  
Souls to souls can never teach  
What unto themselves was taught;"

the other Ellen Sturgis Hooper's

"I slept, and dreamed that life was beauty;  
I waked, and found that life was duty."

Some of Emerson's more unusual rhymes are *mace: conveys*; *blaze*; *use: (noun) muse*; *romance: clans*; *vice: ties*; *Wars: remorse*; *oreads: arcades*; *patriots: roots*; *libraries: dictionaries*; *woods: roads*; *coats: spots*; *zones: towns*; *cavaliers: travellers*; *fairies: contraries*; *resorts: thoughts*; *hours: years*; *doors*; *tones: cotyledons*; *Nemesis: redresses*; *heats: violets*; *solitudes: underwoods*; *bells: daffodels (sic): science: clairvoyance*; *unites: opposites*; *rude: wood*; *gloom: come*; *cloud: blood*; *foot: fruit*; *foot: note*; *shoot: compute*; *not: mote: note*; *shoon: on*; *none: union* (compare Milton's *alone: union*); *sun: dominion*; *go: whereto*; *antipode: glowed*; *odd: period*; *beyond: bound*; *lost: coast*; *thought: not*; *power: emperor*; *cow: caribou*; *come: hum: martyrdom*; *atmosphere: air*; *seer: philosopher*; *are: war*; *art: bard*; *Porto Rique (sic): seek*; *hope: up*; *honey: agrimony*; *waste: passed* (this was a good rhyme in Shakespeare's day); *swamp: lamp*; *dark: clerk* (surviving English



pronunciation); *scarf: wharf; breath: bequeath; kite: freight: parasite; put: nut; again: men; amain: again* (same poem); *wine: time; privilege: liege; realm: film; divided: united*.

The gem of the Emersonian collection is *draw: proprietor*.

Of the American choir, Whittier seems to have had the least trustworthy ear. The whole trend of the present review of the general subject is to show the widespread — almost the universal — assertion, by the poets, of the right to use means toward ends as they choose, obeying the general law, but violating it in the particular. Yet when a poet, as did Whittier, writes in conventional metres and uses the ordinary verse-machinery for the utterance of common emotions of humanity, we do not expect him to claim the freedom of a Blake, a Coleridge, or an Emerson. *War: law* and *dawn: morn*, notwithstanding the weakening of *r* in England and New England, are not yet good usage. *Abroad: lord* is made no more euphonious because it is also used by Kipling. Another Whittier rhyme is *dumb: lyceum*. But in charity we may remember Crashaw's *wishes: blisses: kisses*, and Herrick's *goes: flows: clothes*.

Whittier's liberality as a rhymers may fairly be illustrated by turning not to his earliest or obscurest lyrics, but to a few of his best known pieces. In *The Eternal Goodness* are *flood: good; hath: death; weak: break; have: prove*. In *Our Master* are *full: whole; look: rebuke; gratitude: good; subdued: fatherhood; ineffable: hell; bells: canticles; holocaust: most*. In *Barbara Frietchie* are *Lord: horde; staff: scarf; tost: host*. In *Maud Muller* are *wrongs: tongues; on: alone; poor: door; pain: again; again: been; pen: been*. In *Laus Deo* are *Lord: abroad; abroad: God*.

Some of these, certainly, need Professor G. R. Carpenter's defence: "Whittier's rhymes were loose, but they were the assonances that the people loved."

Whittier's great achievement in rhyme is not the melodious *Dead Ship of Harpswell*, or the refrain of the *Farewell* of a Virginia Slave-Mother, or the beauty of such lines as

"I know not where his islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air;  
I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond his love and care," —

but his successful restoration, in *Snow-Bound*, of the iambic tetrameter, here used not for rapid narrative, as in Scott, but for tender sentiment. Not Goldsmith himself, in his employment of the heroic couplets of *The Deserted Village*, better turned his measure to description of nature, delineation of persons, and that higher spiritual thought which is the ultimate mission of poetry. From the first line to the last *Snow-Bound* is a masterpiece, and a masterpiece not spoiled or materially harmed by its inclusion of some of the rhymes just quoted. It was much to produce octosyllabic couplets capable of presenting such a thought-picture as this:

“What matter how the night behaved?  
 What matter how the north-wind raved?  
 Blow high, blow low, not all its snow  
 Could quench our hearth-fire’s ruddy glow.  
 O Time and Change! — with hair as gray  
 As was my sire’s that winter day,  
 How strange it seems, with so much gone  
 Of life and love, to still live on!  
 Ah, brother! only I and thou  
 Are left of all that circle now, —  
 The dear home faces whereupon  
 That fitful firelight paled and shone.  
 Henceforward, listen as we will,  
 The voices of that hearth are still;  
 Look where we may, the wide earth o’er,  
 Those lighted faces smile no more.  
 We tread the paths their feet have worn,  
     We sit beneath their orchard-trees,  
     We hear, like them, the hum of bees  
 And rustle of the bladed corn;  
 We turn the pages that they read,  
     Their written words we linger o’er,  
 But in the sun they cast no shade,  
 No voice is heard, no sign is made,  
     No step is on the conscious floor!  
 Yet Love will dream, and Faith will trust,  
 (Since He who knows our need is just,) —  
 That, somehow, somewhere, meet we must.  
 Alas for him who never sees  
 The stars shine through his cypress-trees!  
 Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,  
 Nor looks to see the breaking day  
 Across the mournful marbles play!  
 Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,  
     The truth to flesh and sense unknown,

That Life is ever lord of Death,  
And Love can never lose its own !”

Holmes must be classed among the American singers of the second order, — indeed, his best work was in prose. But none of his contemporaries surpassed him in ease of lyrical flow. The natural singers are commonly the rhymers who depart least frequently from the orthoepical laws of their time. Therefore we find a rather unusual smoothness and felicity in the rhymes of Holmes’s best poems. In *The Chambered Nautilus* is no imperfect or unusual rhyme. In *The Last Leaf*, also, is none. So accurate is Holmes that his *wan: gone* and *said: dead* in this poem may hereafter be cited as proofs of pronunciation in his time. Even in his strictly humorous pieces he does not avail himself of the jester’s usual privilege of resorting to strained or unexpected rhymes. In *The Deacon’s Masterpiece* the dialectal *do: yeou*; *taown: raoun’: daown*; and *ellum: sell’em* are accurate. *What: spot* are  $\bar{o}$ , in rural parlance.

With all of Tennyson’s lasting achievements as a poet, his principal mark on the history of English rhyme was made by his successful use of what has since been called the *In Memoriam* metre, — the very phrase being an indication of the novelty and unexpectedness of the triumph. The form — iambic tetrameter, rhymed *abba* — was not strictly new; it occurs in a way in Gottfried of Strasburg’s *Tristan*, in the latter half of the twelfth century, where we have not only *man: kan: man: kan*, but also *list: ist: ist: list*. Chaucer used the arrangement as the quatrain ending the sixain of the stanzas of his *Complaint to his Lady* (Skeat’s nomenclature). Here, however, the line is pentameter, and the group of four lines does not constitute a stanza. In one passage of Dryden’s shorter *St. Cecilia’s Day ode* — the lines being of different lengths — is *flute: discovers: lovers: lute*. Of course, also, the scheme is that of each of the two quatrains opening the Italian sonnet. But Tennyson’s use, in a variety of sober lyrics, was original. The arrangement would be unsuitable for most themes, and even in this case it becomes heavily monotonous at times but as retaining a gravity not inherent in more common forms it was a happy thought on Tennyson’s part. Yet should this *abba* plan be applied to lines

having more than four stresses it would annoy or confuse most modern readers, who would feel that they, and not the poem, were carrying the rhymes.

Of unusual or forced rhymes there are rather fewer in Tennyson than in his predecessors of the earlier romantic school, and far less than in the work of the pre-Raphaelites. We find *illumineth: death* (merely a matter of slow pronunciation); *seas: peace; more: poor; curse: horse; gaze: face; wood: flood; own: crown; tune: moon; one: alone: gone; waist: rest; stars: wars*. *Blood: stood* is to be explained, as in the cases cited in the previous chapter, by the necessity of using an almost rhymeless word. *Christ: mist* is similarly necessary; the very few existing rhymes having small relation to the thought of Christ. *Thundered: hundred* may have been natural in thinking of the three hundred in connection with cannon; but the pronunciation is one of the most objectionable in modern poetry. *Air: sepulchre* is hard to justify on any strict theory. Campbell, in *Hohenlinden*, has *rapidly: scenery: revelry: artillery: rapidly: canopy: chivalry: sepulchre*; his pronunciation was perhaps "sepulchra." But Shelley had *sepulchre: tear*. Mahony ("Father Prout") has *ne'er: sepulchre*; and Andrew Lang (as late as 1871) *dear: sepulchre*.

Tennyson had small objection to identical rhymes; thus he uses *land: land; down: adown; heaviness: weariness*. Identity of final syllables, with changed meaning of the root part of the word, is thus brought down to the latter half of the nineteenth century.

*St. Agnes' Eve* is perhaps his most nearly perfect lyric, in its unity of inner idea and rhyme-effects.

Notwithstanding such successes, from the hands of masters of melody, as the eight-stressed rhymed lines of *The Raven* and *Locksley Hall*, English verse cannot safely — with or without rhyme — go beyond seven stresses. Even the hexameter, when rhyming in itself and not used as a closing alexandrine, leaves a pooreffect. But the nine-stressed rhymed trochaics of Tennyson's *To Virgil* are satisfying, because the poet divides each line by a strong caesural pause for the ear and a typographical break for the eye:



"Roman Virgil, thou that singest  
 Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,  
 Ilion falling, Rome arising,  
 wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre;

"Landscape-lover, lord of language  
 more than he that sang the 'Works and Days,'  
 All the chosen coin of fancy  
 flashing out from many a golden phrase;

"Thou that singest wheat and woodland,  
 tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;  
 All the charm of all the Muses  
 often flowering in a lonely word; . . .

"I salute thee, Mantovano,  
 I that loved thee since my day began,  
 Wielder of the stateliest measure  
 ever moulded by the lips of man."

Tennyson was fond of experimenting in various classical measures, which, though more scannable than the Elizabethans' endeavors, and of course superior in value of idea, he wished to be considered merely as experiments.

In his odes he allowed himself the freedom of inserting some lines with idea-rhyme and internal rhyme.

A master of blank verse,<sup>1</sup> Tennyson also surpassed all his predecessors in English in his unrhymed lyrics. On the whole, the unrhymed lyric — by Heine, Carducci, Arnold, or whatsoever nineteenth-century lyrist, in this or that tongue, remains a thing far from indispensable. Nothing can be compared with Tennyson's *Tears*, *Idle Tears* save Lamb's *The Old Familiar Faces*. In both of these a beautiful and melancholy-melodious refrain virtually constitutes rhymed stanzas. In "Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white," stanzas also seem to be created by "Now sleeps," "Now lies," "Now slides," and "Now folds," and by the ends "thou with me," "on to me," "unto me," "thoughts in me," "lost in me."

Splendidly self-explanatory, in thought and form, is the autobiographical *Merlin and the Gleam*, in which the *gleam* word recurs as often and as effectively as the thought of the ideal in a man's life.

<sup>1</sup> Said Tennyson to William Allingham (Allingham's *Diary*, 294): "It is much easier to write rhyme than good blank verse."

Matthew Arnold, notwithstanding a certain classic reticence in his temper and style, was by no means a close rhymers. He gives us *Thames: aims; away: way; well: fill: still; fire: by her; and morning: dawning*, which last the *London Chronicle* says is a faithful record of present English pronunciation, but is, though used by Blake and Kipling, "the one vulgar rhyme of the language."

In such balances as

"This way, this way,"

followed later on by

"Come away, come away,"

Arnold shows that an irregularity in stress-matter and stress-arrangement may lend new force to rhyme. *Dover Beach* is another illustration of his effective use of this method. But *A Summer Night*, though rhymed, is not rhythmical prose, — not even good prose.

Browning, brave singer of the glory of age, the sureness of immortality, and the honor due to manly force, was at times a master of rhyme, but again seemed to chafe under its fetters. Nothing more melodious could be asked than he gave us in the rhymes of *Evelyn Hope*, *Prospice*, *How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, or the sustained *Rabbi ben Ezra*; yet he sometimes fills up his rhymes with "in fine," "to wit," "say," etc., like a 'prentice hand in poetry. Butler and Byron were not freer in the use of rhymes of all sorts, from the melodious to the ingenious, and from the strict to the absurd. In his case, as elsewhere, we leave unmentioned the ordinary, or so-called "perfect," rhymes, as taken for granted; and we must once more remember that in any poet, however wayward or original in his rhyme-uses, the normal is largely in the majority. But if we marshal some of Browning's more unusual rhymes the result is rather surprising, and may be left to tell its own story:

*Adela: May; balance: nonchalance; blue eye: dewy; balcony: falcon eye; companion: any one; cup more rose: up morose; can know: piano; duplicate: supplicate; dizziness: business; delicat: helicate; die: mulberry; eye-holes: viols; from mice:*

promise; four year-old: Berold; forethought: worth aught;  
 fondly there: beyond lie there; figure: bigger; honour: donour;  
 hand: lands; high: properly; happen: clap pen; ins and outs:  
 thin sand doubts; in hell free: belfry; importune: fortune  
 (formerly correct, and used by Gray); infinite: bright; imperfect  
 say: perfects aye; laymen: amen; London: undone; liberty: I:  
 why; lose: noose; linger: stringer; Master Hugues: fugues;  
 moments: endowments; morass: was; news of her: Lucifer;  
 office: trophies; once: suns; once stir: monster; packed: track;  
 pass: was; plans: Lannes; pullies: portcullis; pray: Africa;  
 religion: pigeon; right: exquisite; reddens: Edens; small mist:  
 psalmist; stature: usurpature; shall see: palsy; Solomon: throne;  
 singer: finger; scores: quarter-emperors; skill: principle: will;  
 slip sees: gypsies; tress: kiss; visit I've: inquisitive; well swear:  
 elsewhere; within wards: inwards; went trickle: ventricle;  
 wreathy hop: Ethiop.

In Pacchiarotto alone are Pacchiarotto: paint-pot-O: lot to:  
 trot toe: got to: hot tow; oratory: art-laboratory; roomy: gloomy:  
 Beccafumi; stubborn: cub-born; one key: monkey; prelude:  
 hell-hued; circle: work ill; was hard: hazard: mazard; Stallo-  
 reggi: allege ye; sides of it: wide so fit; Hades: paid ease: ladies;  
 pooh-poohed it is: lewd ditties: nudities; triumph: cry "Humph";  
 burgess: Boanerges: urges; pontiff: won't if; reared in: mere  
 din; conventional: mention all; bolted: dolt-head; half! a bet?:  
 alphabet; there's X: fair sex; poll's hood: falsehood; trumpets:  
 dumb pets; few venal: Juvenal; Apage: cap a-gee; doublet:  
 sub-let; outside: lout's eyed; visage: this age; tractable: fact able;  
 interpose: purpose; busily: Sicily; open: no pen; quiet eye:  
 society; especially: fresh ally; poverty: covert tie; essayed: yes  
 said; lambdas: damned ass; all! fie: Amalfi; clotpoll: what  
 poll; Siena's: hyenas; ill able: dissyllable; last "If": mastiff;  
 discomfiture: dumb fit sure; need is: incedis; constable: one  
 stable; structure: tucked your; domicile: promise I'll; specimens:  
 esse mens; spark as: carcass; loathsome: oath some; observancy:  
 reserve fancy; abbot: dab-pot: scab hot; transmute: man's mute;  
 consequence: non-sequence; take hold: clay-cold; dungeon: one  
 John; existence: hissed hence; cue be: booby: ruby; mahlstick:  
 all stick; stomach: some ache; nimbly: chimbly; my house:

*pious; grunt is't?: contrapuntist; aubade: so bad; 'scape hence. ha'pence; ranunculus: Tommy-make-room-for-your-Uncle us: homunculus; place in: basin; paddock: ad hoc; convey thought: enswathe ought; envy: then vie; crystalline: small line; goose-wont is: os frontis; chrusaora [Greek]: or ray; vexed here: next year.*

But Browning, says William Allingham in his *Diary*, once subjected a poem by him to a close analysis, "to see if any of the rhymes were forced," and objected to *rose: clothes*.

As regards identical rhymes, Browning was willing to allow *light* instead of *might* as the reading of the last word of the fourth line of the first stanza of Shelley's *Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples*:

"The sun is warm, the sky is clear,  
The waves are dancing fast and bright,  
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear  
The purple noon's transparent might;  
The breath of the moist earth is light  
Around its unexpanded buds;  
Like many a voice of one delight  
The winds', the birds', the ocean-floods' —  
The city's voice itself is soft like Solitude's."<sup>1</sup>

The greatest curiosity in Browning's rhymes is where the three momometers

"Escape me?  
Never,  
Beloved.

are separated the whole length of the poem (sixteen lines) from the corresponding

"I shape me,  
Ever  
Removed."

<sup>1</sup> "Robert Browning wanted me to read *light* for *might*, urging that 'the notion of light as a veil and transparent is familiar with Shelley'; and the Italian practice of making words rhyme which have the same sound but a different sense, not infrequent: 'in this stanza,' he added, 'there is *delight* for *light's* fellow.' The last argument seemed to me to be conclusive against *light*, because Shelley would almost certainly not use the identical syllable as a rhyming terminal thrice so close together." — H. Buxton Forman, in *The Athenæum*, July to December, 1907, p. 155.



A triumph not to be matched in English prosody is the unrhymed trochaic pentameter of *One Word More*, beginning:

“There they are, my fifty men and women  
Naming me the fifty poems finished;  
Take them, Love, the book and me together:  
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.”

The melody of the movement is so constant that it is difficult to disabuse one's mind from the impression that the poem is rhymed.

The severest arraignment of Browning's rhymes is to be found in *The True Function of Criticism*, a dialogue by Oscar Wilde (in *The Nineteenth Century* for July, 1890), in which “Gilbert” says:

“Rhyme, that exquisite echo which in the music's hollow hill creates and answers its own voice; rhyme, which in the hands of a real artist becomes not merely a material element of metrical beauty, but a spiritual element of thought and passion also, waking a new mood, it may be, or stirring a fresh train of ideas, or opening by mere sweetness and suggestion of sound some golden door at which the Imagination itself had knocked in vain; rhyme, which can turn man's utterance and the speech of gods; rhyme, the one chord we have added to the Greek lyre, became in Robert Browning's hands a grotesque, misshapen thing, which made him at times masquerade in poetry as a low comedian, and ride Pegasus too often with his tongue in his cheek.”

Mrs. Browning's indifference to all ordinary rules of rhyme is well known. To make anything like a full list of her peculiar rhymes would fill many pages; the following (arranged alphabetically to correspond with the similar list from her husband's poems) may be given as representative:

*Again: brain; again: men* (both in *Bertha in the Lane*);  
*angels: candles; alone: home; burden: disregarding; brother:*  
*lover; calmly: palm-tree; come: sung; enter: venture; Eden:*  
*heeding; faith: breath: death; forgiven: heaven; Goethe: duty;*  
*greatness: incompleteness; gander: wander: chamber; glade and:*  
*maiden; hero's: tear rose; hat: bag; idyl: middle; know from:*  
*snow-storm; love: prove: Jove; ladies: babies; mainland: train-*  
*band; Modena: God in a; panther: saunter; playing: away in;*  
*pressure: guesser; rarest: heiress; silence: islands; satire: na-*

*ture; suitor: future; trident: silent; valleys: palace; ways: grace; day's: praise; water: her; wildwood: childhood.*

Mrs. Browning herself, when sharply criticised for the looseness of her rhymes, definitely stated that she had worked on a clear, and as she believed correct, theory in the matter. August 13, 1844, she wrote, with a Poesque copiousness of italics, to H. S. Boyd: "Most of the 'incorrectnesses' you speak of may be 'incorrectnesses,' but are not *negligences*. I have a theory about double rhymes for which I shall be attacked by the critics, but which I could justify perhaps on high authority, or at least analogy. In fact, these volumes of mine have more double rhymes than any two books of English poems that ever to my knowledge were printed; I mean of English poems, *not comic*. Now, of double rhymes in use, which are perfect rhymes, you are aware how few there are, and yet you are also aware of what an admirable effect in making a rhythm various and vigorous, double rhyming is in English poetry. Therefore I have used a certain licence; and after much thoughtful study of the Elizabethan writers, have ventured it with the public. And do *you* tell me, *you* who object to the use of a different *vowel* in a double rhyme, *why* you rhyme (as everybody does, without blame from anybody) 'given' to 'heaven,' when you object to my rhyming 'remember' and 'chamber'? The analogy surely is all on my side, and I *believe* that the spirit of the English language is also. . . . I wish you to consider the subject as *a point for consideration* seriously, and not to blame me as a writer of careless verses. If I deal too much in licences, it is not because I am idle, but because I am speculative for freedom's sake."

Frederic G. Kenyon, the editor of Mrs. Browning's letters, in discussing this argument, says that the experiment is "as legitimate as, say, the metrical experiments in hexameters and hendecasyllabics of Longfellow or Tennyson, and whether approved or not it should be criticised as an experiment, not as mere carelessness. . . . That Mrs. Browning's ear was quite capable of discerning true rhymes is shown by the fact that she tacitly abandoned her experiment in assonances. Not only in the pure and high art of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, but even in *Casa Guidi Windows*, the rhetorical and sometimes colloquial

tone of which might have been thought to lend itself to such devices, imperfect rhymes come but rarely.”<sup>1</sup>

In *Lady Geraldine's Courtship* Mrs. Browning made a novel use of internal rhyme, — a use interesting in itself and important in its effect on the form of Poe's *Raven*. The “noblest of her sex” (dedication to Poe's collected poems of 1845) is inseparably connected with the best known of his writings.

There is significance in the title of the late W. E. Henley's collection of *English Lyrics: Chaucer to Poe*. “After Keats,” says Mr. Henley in his introduction, “there is no fresh note, until we hear from over the Atlantic the artful, subtle, irresistible song of Poe: the New Music which none who has heard it can forget, and which, if you listen for it, you will catch in much of the melody that has found utterance since Mr. Swinburne, working after Baudelaire, shocked and enchanted the world with his First Series of *Poems and Ballads*.”

On what did that music depend?

It is atmosphere, not rhyme-freedom or other external thing, that marks originality in a poet. We may find anticipations of Poe even as far back as Dryden's

“Less than a god they thought there could not dwell  
Within the hollow of that shell  
That spoke so sweetly and so well.  
What passion cannot music raise and quell?”

but finally the lordship of verse, like the kingdom of God, is within and not without. Poe's genius is a far more important thing than any or all of his mannerisms; but as he was a life-long student of technique some of his methods specially repay investigation.

His use of the “repetend” — the parallel repetition of expanded or contrasted ideas, with or without change of the rhyme-word — may fairly be called his most characteristic addition to poetic form. He did not invent it; but no other poet, before him or after him, employed it so effectively. Henceforth the device is his own. Akin to Hebrew parallelism and the refrain, it carries us back to the beginnings of poetry; but in its virtually original

<sup>1</sup> “*Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*”: I, 182-4.

manner of use Poe availed himself of a marvellously musical ear.<sup>1</sup>

Word-counting, of which so wearisome a burden is laid upon scholarship in these thesis-manufacturing days, has added little to philology and nothing to literature; but I am tempted to indulge in it for once, in order to see if it may give any aid in the study of Poe's method.

There are in his small book of verse — omitting the unfinished blank-verse drama of *Politian*, which contains no songs — 2121 rhymes, including identical line-endings in the repetends. In the 2121, 1842, or 86 per cent, are perfect sound-correspondences, according to present English pronunciation, leaving 279 imperfect, strained, or unusual. But of these 279, 169 are allowable or in common poetical use — that is, such rhymes as *sea: melody*; *I: melody* (y, as we have noted, has been both *æi* and *ī* since Shakespeare's day); *river: ever*; *love: strove*; *wood: flood*; *given: heaven*; *spirit: inherit*; *none: gone*; *tresses: kisses*; *birth: forth*; *wars: stars*; *woman: human*; *breath: beneath*; *ponder: wonder*; *pain: again* (Poe, like many poets, is obliged to sound *again* in both ways in the same poem). Some of these are made necessary, as so often, by the fewness of rhymes for important words; some are the results of the slow utterance essential to the music of the verse. Occasionally, but more rarely than his pre-Raphaelite admirers, Poe employs an unusual accent in an otherwise perfect rhyme, as *tree-top: drop*; *hence: reverence*.

Omitting all these allowable rhymes, 169 in all, we have remaining only 110 that can be called in any sense unusual; that is, Poe employs but five per cent of forced and out-of-the-way rhymes. Of these latter, the ones deserving citation on the basis employed in our similar lists from other poets are as follows:

*That is: lattice: thereat is; lent thee: sent thee: nepenthe; re-*

<sup>1</sup> Quoting from F. B. Gummere's *Handbook of Poetics*, 153, the remark that what is called perfect rhyme [identity] "is now entirely foreign to English verse," C. Alphonso Smith, in his *Repetition and Parallelism in English Verse*, 148, adds that "Poe skillfully disguises the effect of his perfect rhymes by lessening the emphasis of the repeated rhyme-word. This he does by throwing a sudden and superior emphasis on the newly introduced word or words that serve to differentiate the two forms of the repetend."



*assure me: o'er me: bore me: d'Elormie* (proper name invented for the sake of the rhyme); *June: moon; valleys: palace; musically: valley; swamp: encamp; been* (Poe's regular pronunciation): *serene; holy: melancholy; bliss: is; suit: lute: mute; intrude: solitude: food: imbued; solitude: stood; wan: man; Dian: dry on: lion; kissed her: vista: sister; Leda: reader; Ferdinando: can do; arrant: transparent; fancies: pansies; many: Annie; early: dearly; upon: known; rode: God; was: pass; years: cares; tent: extravagant; shade and: maiden; glade and: maiden* (used by Mrs. Browning).

After all, this is a very modest list, compared with those gathered from the Brownings and Emerson. *Kissed her: vista: sister* and *Leda: reader* are rather Cockneyish in appearance, but represent a common sound, as do *arrant: transparent*. *Tent: extravagant* is unexpected, but occurred in a juvenile poem.

The gems of the collection, however, are the two last, of which the young Poe wrote:

"The rhyme . . . has the appearance of affectation. It is, however, imitated from Sir Walter Scott, or rather from Claud Halcro, in whose mouth I admired its effect:

'Oh were there an island  
Tho' ever so wild  
Where woman might smile, and  
No man be beguil'd,' etc."

*Shadow: Eldorado*, the germ of Poe's last poem, appears in the early *Dreamland*.

A curious early rhyme is *paroquet: say*. Frankly 'prentice-work (perhaps meant to be altered) is, in *Fairy Land*,

"Like — almost anything —  
Or a yellow albatross."

rhyming with *covering* and *toss*.

Internal rhymes, of which Poe was fond, are usually but not always introduced at regular intervals.

Alliteration is of course often employed, but seldom as in "the pallid bust of Pallas."

The assonance or internal rhyme of *Peccavimus: but rave not thus* (*Lenore*) is unmatched elsewhere; the modern reader must

remember that the English pronunciation of Latin was in vogue in America in Poe's day.

Poe does not avoid assonance in consecutive lines ending, for instance, *pride: guise: beside: eyes*; or even *see: sky: droopingly: eye*; whether he did not notice it, or considered it a merit, is hard to tell. In the next-to-the-last division of *Tamerlane* the consecutive endings are *more: so: door: low: stone: known: show: below: woe*. Nor does he object to *given: alone: heaven: tone: striven: throne: down: crown*, where the stanza-scheme is *abababcc*.

The following poems are in blank verse: *The Coliseum*, *To Helen* (the longer poem of that title), *To M. L. S.*, and *To ———*; total lines, 157. In them the feminine ending is unusually frequent. In *To Helen* it abounds, and in *To M. L. S.* eight lines out of eighteen are feminine. In *To ———* the second line has six feet. Richard Henry Stoddard once remarked that to the end of his life Poe remained a mere tyro in blank verse; certainly these four pieces are not indispensable. The worthlessness of this *To Helen* is in startling contrast with the beauty of the lyric of the same name.

Similarly poor are the sonnets, of which *Silence* has fifteen lines, rhymed *ababedddccejefgg*. Poe was master of peculiar verse-forms of the kinds associated with his name, but more feebly used the orthodox measures.

Of rhymeless lines in rhymed poems, aside from identities, there are only eighteen; two in *Eldorado*; twelve in *Annabel Lee*; and four in *Evening Star*, which turns into rhyme after the start.

Of lines with identical endings, owing to Poe's use of the repetend, there are no less than 63 in *Ulalume*, 54 in *The Raven*, 36 in *The Bells*, and 34 in *For Annie*; 18 others make a total of 205. Of all Poe's poems *Ulalume* is the most characteristic, both of his genius and of his method of expression. The following from *Ulalume* —

"And I said — 'She is warmer than Dian:  
She rolls through an ether of sighs,  
She revels in a region of sighs:  
She has seen that the tears are not dry on

These cheeks where the worm never dies,  
 And has come past the stars of the Lion  
 To point us the path to the skies,  
 To the Lethean peace of the skies:  
 Come up, in despite of the Lion,  
 To shine on us with her bright eyes:  
 Come up through the lair of the Lion,  
 With love in her luminous eyes' — ”

suggests Swinburne in two or three places, though not as strongly as the Byron stanzas quoted on page 166.

The repetend appears in all but one stanza (the second) of *The Raven*. Poe prided himself on *The Raven* stanza, as containing “some altogether novel effects, arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.” Whether his account of its evolution, in *The Philosophy of Composition*, be considered forethought or afterthought, it is an interesting study of a poem by its maker. Another study of *The Raven* may be made by any reader who will compare it with *Locksley Hall*, and note how different an effect is given to Poe's lines, though in Tennyson's metre, by the internal rhyme, the repetend, and the feminine ending.

“While, to listen, the red levin  
 (With the rapid Pleiads, even,  
 Which were seven)  
 Pauses in heaven,”

in *Israfel*, seems to have been influential upon Rossetti's *The Blessed Damsel*, the first stanza of which, in the original form, was

“The blessed Damsel leaned out  
 From the gold bar of heaven:  
 Her blue deep eyes were deeper much  
 Than a deep water, even.  
 She had three lilies in her hand,  
 And the stars in her hair were seven.”

The most noticeable mark of the rhymes of the “pre-Raphaelite” school in the English verse of the second half of the nineteenth century — I use the term broadly, as including not only Rossetti and Morris but also Swinburne — is the forcing of rhymes falling on final syllables, as in Rossetti's *well: audible:*

*tell: fell*, and so on in many cases. This mannerism is clearly due to two things: pleasure in a lingering pronunciation that gives the fullest sound-values; and a thorough enjoyment of ballad and other archaic models. Thus Rossetti rhymed *me: Nineveh; unaccountable: shell: well; hers: wing-feathers; indeed: opened: fire-footed*. The pre-Raphaelite *wan water* was sure to reflect *her*. Elsewhere Rossetti did not fear to join *win: him; veterans: France; strong: flung; years: stirs; calm: warm*.

Of the rhymes in the first version of *The Blessed Damozel* — which, it will be remembered, was written when the young Rossetti was strongly influenced by Poe's *Raven*, and was designed to be a counterpart to that poem — forty-two are perfect. For the rest, we have *heaven: even: seven; adorn: worn: corn; choristers: hers: years; on: begun: sun; calm: warm: arm; fierce: pierce: spheres; said: prayed: afraid; untrod: God: period; tree: be: audibly; me: be: verily; spheres: barriers: tears*.

*The Blessed Damozel* was published in *The Germ* in 1850. Then came *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems*, by William Morris (1858). This was pre-Raphaelite through and through; beginning with the unaccustomed spelling of *Guenevere*, it was consistently unlike the prevalent English poetry of the time, in titles, antique words, ultra-Keats-like rhymes, and mediæval spirit. Tennyson had prepared the immediate way, to some extent; and Browning, for reasons which I have never been quite able to fathom, was high in the favor of the new group; but, after all, its members had a tone of their own, which survived only in Swinburne, and died with him.

Morris's first book was received with inextinguishable laughter by the very journal (*The Athenæum*) which afterwards became, in the reviews written by Theodore Watts-Dunton, the principal Swinburnian exponent. But there was more than affectation in *Rapunzel, The Blue Closet, Shameful Death*, and some of the rest, queer as they were. Affectation, indeed, — if chargeable against others of the group, or its lesser copyists, — belonged to Morris in no more than a limited sense; he was as sincere in his literary archaisms as in his later work as designer, decorator, printer, and socialist. As Burne-Jones said of himself, Morris belonged



to the fourteenth century. A man has a right to believe that there was good and beauty in mediævalism, if he seeks to transfer that good and beauty to his own times, for the benefit of his fellows.

The general character of Morris's rhymes did not differ materially from that of the rhymes of Rossetti and Swinburne. The proportion of unusual sound-concurrences is perhaps somewhat smaller in him than in his associates; yet in *The Defence of Guenevere* volume we find *sword: word: cord; sword: sward; lord: sword; alone: son; on: son; fear: where; plaits: bats; tower: lower* (adverb); *floods: woods; promises: ease; said: maid; hand: bend: send; year: out-wear; bliss: is; though: through; have: brave; also: know; preux: shew: new; again: pain: fain; again: then: ten* (same poem); *brow: blow; you: do: so; hands: commands: wands; fingers: lingers: singers.*

In one respect Morris surpassed all other nineteenth-century poets. Not since Chaucer had English literature possessed so long a narrative poem as *The Earthly Paradise*. It lacks the breezy good cheer of *The Canterbury Tales*, for this "idle singer of an empty day" was touched with a gentle melancholy. But there is a fascination in it which begins with its beautiful title and ends with its last page — a fascination partly due, like that of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, to its abstraction from the thoughts and words of to-day. After all, the true province of rhyme is to charm the reader; and *The Earthly Paradise* would have been impossible without the binding and unifying power of rhyme. It is the rhyme, more than the metre, which furnishes the regularly recurrent music of these twenty-four tales. Narrative charm may inhere in stories told in blank verse, as witness the *Idyls of the King*; but there is a softer grace in Spenser's and Morris's melody, which depends upon the variety-in-unity given by rhyme to stanza or couplet.

For Morris's rhyme-use in this his masterpiece, we may turn to a page of *The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, as giving us a fair average. Here, to begin with, are *moon: boon* and *moon: tune* — variation enough to equip a theorist concerning Chaucerian or Shakespearean pronunciation. For the rest, we find *was: pass; around: round; enow* (īnau): *show; love: move;*

*quest-chamber: hear; bear: hear; memory: by; stared: heard; why: history; place: ways.*

No poet since Poe has evoked a greater number of new melodies from the old English lyre than Algernon Charles Swinburne.

In general, with all his apparently inexhaustible fertility as a rhymers, Swinburne is not abnormal or eccentric in his choice of correlated sounds. No such miscellany of rough assonances of every kind as we have just culled from the Brownings could be drawn from the collected edition of his works. Some of the pre-Raphaelite rhymes mentioned under Rossetti's name may be found in Swinburne; but in general, he relies upon familiar methods. The novelty of his verse depends upon the arrangement of metre and rhyme, and upon an almost inexhaustible vocabulary.

Of rhymes which we may call earmarks of the pre-Raphaelites we find *fell: insatiable; grass: was; her: harp-player; well-water: her; hair: lovelier*. Rossetti might also have used *brows: house: poisonous. Quiet: riot* and *hers: worse* are Mrs.-Browningesque. Other somewhat forced or unusual rhymes are *place: ways; spume: loom; men: rain; kiss: is; whit: sweet; green: sin; cheer: her; sit: feet; them: flame; men: again: rain* (in which *again* occupies its usual compromise position with more than usual nicety of non-committal); *pressure: pleasure*. In a few instances he uses identical rhymes; such as *sea: see; is: is; be: be*. The assonance *God: blood* is frequent in other poets; *month: doth* is unusual anywhere, and seems like a slip.

But it is in his larger methods that Swinburne's originality is chiefly to be found. In *Faustine* are the following monorhymes with the title word in order: *lean* (verb): *clean: queen: sheen: therein: between: ween: thin: kin: wean: screen: mien: Magdalene: mean* (verb): *seen: skin: win: lean* (adjective): *scene: in: din: sin: teen: begin: spin: glean: green: fin: serene: Mitylene: gin: unclean: epicene: obscene: mean* (adjective): *love-machine: Lampsacene: been: wherein: chin: keen*. This reminds one of the Provençal methods of accumulation.

*The Armada* consists of eight-stressed lines, trochaic and dactylic, with an accented syllable at the end, and rhymes not only at the close but at the third and eighth syllables of the line:

“England, none that is born thy son, and lives, by grace of thy glory,  
 free,  
 Lives and yearns not at heart and burns with hope to serve as he  
 worships thee;  
 None may sing thee: the sea-wind’s wing beats down our songs as it  
 hails the sea.”

In the *Choriambics* of the second series of *Poems and Ballads* the choriambics themselves are preceded by a trochee at the beginning of each line, and are followed by a rhyming iambus:

“Love, what ailed thee to leave life that was made lovely, we thought,  
 with love?  
 What sweet visions of sleep lured thee away, down from the light  
 above?”

Here the metre is perfectly obvious when looked at, but would not occur to the ordinary reader without the help of the title.

In Swinburne’s *A Century of Roundels* the fetters of the roundel, even when he stretches them by the use of his *ababbababab* system, and the use of feet of varying numbers and lengths, do not show his remarkable powers as well as the freer measures. In some of these roundels he makes the refrain a single word or even syllable; as in *Sleep*, the first seven lines of which are as hard to reduce to grammatical order as Browning’s *Sordello*. When rhyme-devices become too intricate they are verbal puzzles rather than aids to either pleasure or memory; the scheme entangles the poet.

In *Hesperia* are six stresses with rhyme; a measure usually unsuccessful in English, because of the monotony of our strongly marked caesura, virtually breaking the line into two short and rather jerky halves. But it is not necessary to catalogue Swinburne’s stanza-forms and scansion-systems.

Two things are the chief characteristics of Swinburne’s verse and give it a distinction of its own. One is his intricate and apparently indefinite use of “alliteration’s artful aid,” which, with him, rises from the place of an old-fashioned metrical trick into that of unforgettable music. Alliteration cannot be banished, as some would banish it, while the works of its chief masters in the nineteenth century — Poe and Swinburne — remain on the

heights. In them our first English rhyme has once more come to its own, though in a different way.<sup>1</sup>

Swinburne's other chief characteristic is his use of the iambic-anapæstic line, of three or four stresses, usually in an eight-line stanza, with feminine rhymes at the ends of lines 1, 3, 5, and 7. The externally beautiful, if morally objectionable, *Dolores* of the first series of *Poems and Ballads* is in this form, as well as the *Dedication* (to Edward Burne-Jones) of the same famous volume. So (with the exception of the last line) is the lyric in the second series, which may be taken, on the whole, as the best single illustration of Swinburne's method and success: *A Forsaken Garden*. In it the final line is more than once a clear revival, in English, of the classical foot the molossus. The form of the poem was not, of course, Swinburne's invention; we have found it in Byron (see page 166). But henceforth it belongs to Swinburne, by right of eminent domain. One ignorant of English might take pleasure in listening to the melody of the pathetically melodious lines. Nor is it easy to find in any language since the Greek a truer combination of majesty and music than in the closing stanza:

"Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,  
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,  
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble  
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,  
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,  
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,  
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,  
Death lies dead."

Novalis once said that "poems which sound melodiously and are full of beautiful words, but without any sense or connection" are the height of art. This remark is refuted by the whole history of literature, from Job to Wordsworth. Much, perhaps most, of Swinburne's work must be thrown aside as lacking that which makes "baggage for eternity." But certainly he left English verse richer than he found it.

There is a proper place, between rhyme and blank verse, for

<sup>1</sup> "Another of Swinburne's feats of metrical invention was the discovery that alliteration was the true basis of English poetry." — JAMES DOUGLAS: *The Athenæum*, Apr. 17, 1909.



anything that makes a pleasing effect or suits the thought. A certain advantage lies in the variant, — even in the discord, if the golden mean between rule and license be observed. Therefore there is a legitimate, and indeed an indispensable, use in the higher literature for the noble semi-rhythmical prose of the Authorized Version of the Bible, and for the balance and swing into which we naturally fall in prayer, in eulogy, in fervid political oratory, and in picturesque description.<sup>1</sup> This is the element which gives pleasureableness to Milton's *Areopagitica*, to Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, and to Carlyle's *Everlasting Yea* chapter in *Sartor Resartus*. The difference between them — and a hundred other noble passages of English prose — and the best part of Macpherson's *Ossian* or Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* is one of attainment rather than form. Macpherson won a wide though temporary fame because of the majesty of some of his thoughts and the unusual manner of their expression; he failed to retain that renown because readers discovered that grammatical inversion is not necessarily poetic eloquence. Whitman really invented nothing in his poetic form; he used a vehicle as old as impassioned or imaginative prose. Sometimes he employed it well, sometimes ill; he was at his best when nearest to a real but free balance between idea and idea; he was at his worst when he merely threw lists of words at his readers, expecting them to find poetry in a jumbled page of the dictionary or the geographical index.

Instead of adding another to the existing analyses of Whitman's measures, let us turn to his own statement of his metrical purpose. For this we are indebted to Professor Bliss Perry's life of the poet, in which is recovered a "notice," written by himself, of his Dartmouth poem of 1872. This statement was designed — unsuccessfully as it proved — for editorial use in a Washington paper. If we dismiss from our minds its amazing egotism we shall find it a really important utterance of the aim and method of one of the most considerable poets of the nineteenth century:

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, in the sweep of strong feeling, rhyme itself unconsciously enters, as in Lincoln's "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away" (*Second Inaugural*).

“Walt Whitman’s form of composition is not attractive at first sight to accustomed readers of verse. He discharges himself quite altogether from the old laws of ‘poetry,’ considering them and their results unfit for present needs, and especially unfit for the United States; and claims to inaugurate an original modern style, to be followed and expanded by future writers. His theory is that our times exhibit the advent of two especially new creative worlds, or influences, giving a radically changed form to Civilization, namely, the world of science for one, and the world of democratic republicanism for another; and that a third influence, a new poetic world of character and form, adjusted to the new spirit and facts and consistent with democracy and science, is indispensable. He says the United States must found their own imaginative literature and poetry, and that nothing merely copied from and following out the feudal world will do. His aim is therefore a profound one and essentially revolutionary. He dismisses without ceremony all the orthodox accoutrements, tropes, verbal haberdashery, ‘feet,’ and the entire stock in trade of rhyme-talking heroes and heroines and all the love-sick plots of customary poetry, and constructs his verse in a loose and free metre of his own, of an irregular length of lines, apparently lawless at first perusal, although on closer examination a certain regularity appears, like the recurrence of lesser and larger waves on the sea-shore, rolling in without intermission, and fitfully rising and falling.

“In this free metre, and in verses — when you get the hang of them — singularly exhilarating, and that affect one like an atmosphere unusually charged with oxygen, he, by a perpetual series of what might be called *ejaculations*, manages to express himself on about every theme interesting to humanity, or known to the body, passions, experiences, emotions of man or woman, or sought by the intellect and soul.”

It has sometimes been said that the noblest poetry is that which is most unstudied. It is true that sophisticated and over-artistic verse is not the best; but neither is that which is most nearly destitute of art. As well say that an idea is a cathedral and an outcry an oration. In fact, Whitman’s apparently careless verse was carefully elaborated on a definite plan, and was at its best

when most elaborated. One has only to examine a page of Mr. McKay's variorum edition of *Leaves of Grass* to see how clearly Whitman's scheme lay in his mind; and how closely he followed it, in revisions more careful than many other poets have given to their scansion and rhyme. The lilt of his verse is unmistakable. A definite thought is taken, and clearly uttered at the start. Then, in its elaboration, point after point is cumulatively added, antithesis being treated as subordinate to the rise of the effect. In this particular, *Leaves of Grass* differs from Hebrew parallelism, in which statement is splendidly set over against statement, and catalogues, if introduced, are usually put into a sort of refrain form. In brief, in the Psalms the utterances are likely to be in a *decani-cantoris* alternation; in *Leaves of Grass* the whole passage is a unit. In the former there are usually two ideas in each division; in the latter there may be almost any number. But Whitman well knew the value of contrast, as he moved toward his cumulative effect. Take, for instance, the poem which gives the text of his life-work; a study of its general form, special elaboration, and minutely careful revision will show that no rhyming lyrist was more obedient to laws of poetical rhetoric:

"I was looking a long while for a clue to <sup>1</sup> the history of the past for myself, and for these chants — and now I have found it;  
 It is not in those paged fables in the libraries, (them I neither accept nor reject;)  
 It is no more in the legends than in all else;  
 It is in the present — it is this earth to-day;  
 It is in Democracy — (the purport and aim of all the past;) <sup>2</sup>  
 It is the life of one man or one woman to-day — the average man of to-day;  
 It is in <sup>3</sup> languages, social customs, literatures, arts;  
 It is in <sup>4</sup> the broad show of artificial things, ships, machinery, politics, creeds, modern improvements, and the interchange of nations,  
 All for the average man of to-day."

It is interesting to note that the famous poem *O Captain, my Captain*, which stands at the height of Whitman's attainment,

<sup>1</sup> "A clue to" added in 1870.

<sup>2</sup> In editions before 1860, "It is in democracy, in this America, the old world also."

<sup>3</sup> "In" added in 1870.

<sup>4</sup> "In" added in 1870.

is partially rhymed — some of the rhymes being perfect and some assonantal — and regularly rhythmical.

At the risk of an anti-climax, a few words must be added with reference to humorous verse, for the reason that it has, by its very nature, been able to extend the limits of the possible vocabulary of rhyme. Comic poetry has the jester's privilege, the queerness of its verbal turns adding to that surprise which is its essence.

Butler coined many new rhymes in *Hudibras*, the first poem to have what we call a "rollicking" metre.

Byron, at the dawn of the nineteenth century, set the fashion for a long line of followers of *Don Juan*; after *intellectual: hen-pecked you all* anything was possible.

Richard Harris Barham's *Ingoldsby Legends* of 1840-6 was a widely popular, and in its time a frequently imitated, collection of jingles; but it relied for the most part on whimsical ideas rather than rhyme-novelties. Barham seldom went farther in search of the latter than *friar: squire; draws: turquoise: jack-daws; gone: on: dawn; slower: before: door; pious is: diocese; Lord May'r: declare: there; ewer: pure: Namur; dreams: Rheims*. Sometimes his jocosities in rhyme — like Thackeray's "R" for "ah" — were typographical, addressed to the eye only: *you: 2; sex: X*.

James Russell Lowell's chief contribution to the history of rhyme is to be found in his humorous verse. In his *Fable for Critics* he was not content to run no farther afield than had Barham. The whole poem is a revel of absurd rhymes. In his search for jingles, if he did not find one, he did not hesitate to make one, as in *Methusalem: Jerusalem*. Among the other rhymes in this poem are:

Proper names:

*wad: God; deserving: Irving; Barnaby Rudge: fudge; untwistable: Cristabel; Jackson's: racks one's; lichens: Dickens; loamy: Romae; have any: Daphne; Beaumont: moment; verjuiced: Zerduscht; shabbily: Rabelais; wry kink: Duyckinck; Fuseli: lily; Homer: no more; Wordsworth: herd's worth; Bryant: client; fright one: Aristogeiton; unshaken: Bacon; seek: Tieck; rely on: scion: ply on: try on: eye on: Zion: buy one: fie on: lion: spy one: wry one: die on.*



With Latin words:

*herb is: imberbis; majorum: wore 'em; shabbily: immediate; slippery: slip awry: desipere: frippery: skipper he.*

Identities:

*dialogue: die a log; metaphor: met afore.*

Miscellaneous:

*brought over: thought of her; charities: where'er it is; come-outer: about her; crosses: proboscis; direct you all: effectual; dreamily: simile; fill his: lilies; forest: no rest; has to risk: asterisk; intrude: wood (pun on wooed); irresistible: whist-table; know it's: poets; mistress: kiss trees; phylactery: manufactory; rebels (verb): else; rebellers: cellars; steps he: dyspepsy; sell us his: jealousies; store: lower; treefied: deified; toss over: philosopher: loss of her; vary: prairie; visit: explicit; war if: tariff.*

In this *Fable*, as everybody remembers, Lowell inserted his well-known characterization of Poe, "three fifths of him genius and two fifths sheer fudge," who

"talks like a book of iambs and pentameters  
In a way to make people of common sense damn metres."

Less known, and a surprising outburst, is

"He [Holmes] has a perfect sway of what I call a sham metre,  
But many admire it, the English pentameter."

Lowell's *Biglow Papers*, largely in Yankee dialect, contain many queer rhymes, and many that record local folk-pronunciation. All through Lowell's poems, jocose or serious, he shows a willingness to turn or invent words for his uses. Colonel Higginson once spoke of him as "tangled in tropes"; certainly, in his rhymes as in his ideas, he would have been a greater poet had he been less concerned with his last thought and its instant effect. But sometimes he had a right to let rhymes run loose, as in the verses he sent his neighbor John Bartlett, on receipt of a seven-pound trout,—which gift evoked *college or: sogdologer; tragi-comedies: aplomb at ease; talents his: balances; Castaly: fast ally; moccasins: stock o' sins; o'er-step it half: epitaph.*

But the most enjoyable of all the school of "rollicking" rhymers is Francis Mahony, "Father Prout." The apparently wayward but always delightful prodigality of the *Reliques* is its constant charm; one never knows when he is to come upon some new touch of wit or humor, some clever translation or paraphrase, some ingenious Greek, Latin, or French version of a familiar poem, which Mahony thereupon declares to have been borrowed from his alleged newly-discovered original. *The Rogueries of Tom Moore* remains the classic example of this sort of polyglot fooling. Mahony's pretended French original of *The Burial of Sir John Moore* deceived an American magazine in the twentieth century.

Sometimes Mahony turns back to the natural end-rhyme of mediæval Latin, as where O'Meara, in *The Watergrasshill Carousal*, says that in his convent "the repast is divided into three distinct periods; and in the conventual refectory you can easily distinguish at what stage of the feeding time the brotherhood are engaged. The first is called, 1°, *altum silentium*; then, 2°, *clangor dentium*; then, 3°, *rumor gentium*." In general, Mahony's rhyme-freedom is satisfied with any similarity which is at once musical in itself and appropriate to its theme. Assonance appears more frequently in his rollicking than in his pathetic verse. *Pat Lardner owes: blarney rose* is as good an example as any. In *anthem: grant him*, and many similar rhymes, the Hibernian element is intentionally introduced. Indeed, in the gem of the book, *The Shandon Bells*, the author attempted to transfer to English the assonantal rhymes of the old Irish songs, as, for instance, in the third stanza:

"I've heard bells tolling  
Old 'Adrian's Mole' in,  
Their thunder rolling  
From the Vatican,  
And cymbals glorious  
Swinging uproarious  
In the gorgeous turrets  
Of Nôtre Dame;  
But thy sounds were sweeter  
Than the dome of Peter  
Flings o'er the Tiber,  
Pealing solemnly; —

O! the bells of Shandon  
 Sound far more grand on  
 The pleasant waters  
 Of the river Lee."

But it is interesting to note, in connection with complaints, old and new, of the burdensomeness of the fetters of rhyme, that this apparently freest of rhymers strongly pleads for the advantages of restriction; he paraphrases from "an ingenious Frenchman, the Chevalier de la Faye," the following:

"From the rhyme's restrictive rigour  
 Thought derives its impulse oft,  
 Genius draws new strength and vigour,  
 Fancy springs and shoots aloft.  
 So, in leaden conduits pent,  
 Mounts the liquid element,  
 By pressure forced to climb:  
 And he who feared the rule's restraint  
 Finds but a friendly ministrant  
 In Reason's helpmate, RHYME;"

and goes on to say:

"Prose may rejoice in its Latin designation of *soluta oratio*; but a voluntary thralldom is the natural condition of poetry, as may be inferred from the converse term, *oratio stricta*. The Italian poet is distinguishable among his fellow-captives by the light ærial nature of his fetters; and *versi sciolti* may be applied to more than one species of his country's versification. This will strike any one who takes up the *libretto* of an opera. Nevertheless, let us envy not the smooth and Sybarite stanza, nor covet the facile and flowing vocabulary, nor complain of the wild and irregular terminations with which we have to struggle. There is more dignity in the march of a manly barbarian than in the gait of an enervated fop; and with all the cumbrous irons of a rude language, were it but for his very mode of bearing the chains, a Briton will be still admired as he treads the paths of poetry:

Intactus aut Britannus ut descenderet  
 Sacrà catenatus viâ.

*Epod. vii.*

I shall not be accused of travelling out of the record in touching incidentally on this matter, which, indeed, would properly require a special dissertation."

For rapidity of cheery movement and ease of elaborate rhyme Richard Hovey's *Barney McGee* is enjoyable; here are *clarity: vulgarity: carrotty; Chiante there: Dante there: spumante there; scintillate: in till late; purse to you: thirst to you: worse to you; deracinate: fascinate: assassinate; gab allay: Rabelais: abbey lay; Latinity: honorificabilitudinity: vicinity; stammer in: Cameron: Decameron; flim-flam at all: sham at all: damn it all.*

I have spoken of Browning's monometers. But the shortest line in the verse of any language, so far as is known to the present writer, is contained in the following by George Arnold, a forgotten New York magazinist:

"Here,  
With my beer  
I sit,  
While golden moments flit:  
Alas!  
They pass  
Unheeded by:  
And, as they fly,  
I,  
Being dry,  
Sit, idly sipping here  
My beer."

Humorous poetry naturally continues to be a fertile field for experimentation in the rhyme art. In *Punch*, within the past few years, under the editorship of the clever parodist and poet, Mr. Owen Seaman, have appeared many poems which have proved that the resources of English rhyme, in word and arrangement, are by no means exhausted. Thus in *Back to the Land* (Jan. 25, 1905) are *Dagonet: autowagonette; chance a lot: Lance-lot; mercy veil: Percivale; plenish all: seneschal; stocked a pod: octopod*. The rhyming of the last word of the line with a following word constituting a line by itself, — as in *From a Sabine Farm* (May 30, 1906), while not strictly new, is carried out with a cleverness which shows that Hood's knack has not been lost. *More Whitewash* (Oct. 17, 1906) has *disgracefully: tracefully; unfair it is: barbarities; massacre: alas! occur; courtesy: hurt as he; be or is: theories*.

In a class by itself is *Punch's Abbreviation's Artful Aid*, the



only poem in the language, as far as I know, in which fragments of words are used as rhymes :

“The Bard, at times,  
Is stumped for rhymes,  
Without the least excuse.  
He could defy  
Such moments by  
Abbreviation’s use.  
For words like Bucks:  
Or even Ess:  
Are not a lux:  
But a necess:

“So simp: a rule  
May seem pecul:  
And make the crit: indig:  
What matter if  
The scans: is diff:  
The meaning too ambig:?  
The net result  
Lacon: and punct:  
Is worth a mult:  
Of needless unct:” etc.

And now, at the end of our long path, we must ask, once more, the question which has been the underlying thought of every preceding page, What is the higher service of rhyme?

Rhyme, of course, is no mere ornament in modern poetry, but a superadded thing of great importance. It beats time; it arrests the attention; it is the one thing, in the average mind, which differentiates poetry from prose; it is a help to the memory; it is, at its best, absolute music, without reference to what it means; it affects, far more than classical quantity could ever do, the choice, sense, and arrangement of most of the words in its immediate environment, and sometimes of words several lines distant; while in many cases it assumes the complete domination of the mind which originally evoked it.

The final test of rhyme, as of every artistic means toward an end, is the charm of the finished result. Better one delightful lyric than a library of treatises like this.

Is rhyme, strictly defined, an essential element in English poetry? Clearly not. Is it a great added element of strength and beauty? The whole history of our poetry gives an affirmative

answer. Yet even now there occasionally comes from some poet or critic a renewal of the old Elizabethan outcry against it. George Meredith said that "as quantity is denied to the English tongue, rhymes there must be." "That hard, consonantal smack on the ear of an exact similarity of sound is required in what is called our heroic verse, which relies for its effects on the timely clapper." But "the many writers of verse are wearing the poor stock [of rhyme] to shreds." "An unrivalled instrumentalist like Mr. Swinburne, prince of lyrists, does marvels with the language. Lesser men, however, correct their rhyming; betray the cramp of their hand in frequent repetitions of the rhymes." Others carry their complaint farther than Meredith, and would revive the attempt to dispense with rhyme. The new censors do not undertake to revive the classical forms; classical scholarship is making a losing fight in these "practical" days. But the burden of rhyme still rests heavily upon some who crave a larger freedom. What more splendid effect, they say, can be secured than that attained by the Authorized Version of the Psalms or the Book of Job? Therefore *vers libre*, or balanced semi-rhythmical prose, will be the verse-form of the future.

But, in the broad view, the poets have mastered rhyme, not rhyme the poets. In it — first in alliteration, then in end-rhyme — they early found a great and unfailing means of correlating ideas and giving perennial melody to words. Then, at the very time when unsuccessful attempts were making to foist classical quantity upon English stress, came blank verse, using that iambic pentameter which, in its rhymed form, had already proved most suitable for all sustained poetry in our vernacular. Finally, end-rhyme, at first a time-beater, or at best a magnifier of emotion, became so intimately connected with the whole metrical structure as to make "rhyme," in popular speech, synonymous with poetry itself.

On the whole, notwithstanding fettering influences at various periods, the history of English end-rhyme has been marked by a freedom at least as great as that of alliteration. The spontaneity of the early ballads was recovered in the poetry of the nineteenth century, which, from the *Lyrical Ballads* to *Poems and Ballads*, has shown a rhyming versatility never before equalled.

As in instrumental music, so in poetry: lesser details of pleasure-giving change with the centuries, but the æsthetic sense, and even the general methods by which it is addressed, remain the same. So, for twelve hundred years, the English-speaking world has been made better and more beautiful by the manifold service of rhyme.





## APPENDIX

### EXPERIMENTS IN RHYME

AMONG the many examples of rhyme-arrangement in stanzas considered in the present study, I have found none in which (1) only the first syllables of the lines rhyme;<sup>1</sup> (2) only the middle syllables; (3) rhymes run down through the first and middle syllables, as well as the final; (4) the first and last syllables of the lines rhyme. For lack of illustrations of the effect of such arrangements I have made a few verses of my own, which the reader will please consider experiments, not poems.

The first, if read aloud, will probably leave on the hearer's ear an effect scarcely different from blank verse:

#### LOON LAKE

All the children of the northern wood  
Call across the lonely inland lake:  
Moose and caribou and deer and fox,  
Goose and bittern, grouse and duck and jay.  
Life is theirs, and days of forest joy,  
Strife and love, and sunshine after rain.

Mark you that clear cry a mile away?  
Hark! the loon, in laugh Aristophanic:  
Ha ha ha ha! ha ha ha ha!

Who would not be glad on such a day?  
Blue the sky, and fair the western wind,  
Not a care to trouble bird or beast,  
Spot that never knew the thought of woe.  
Yet what wail of anguish do I hear,  
Set to all the agony of the world?

Mark you that clear cry a mile away?  
Hark! the loon, in chorus Æschylean:  
Aaooa! aaooa!

<sup>1</sup> See p. 73.

In the second, the rhymes at the strong caesural pauses are obvious enough, but the remainders of the lines seem like rather abrupt prose:

### BOOKS IN THE DARK

I sit amid my books, as twilight deepens fast;  
I know them by their looks, though now I cannot see  
The titles that they bear, for who that loves his friends  
Need have them always wear their names upon their backs?

That worn and rusty calf, — how well I still recall  
The dollar and a half it cost a Freshman's purse!  
'T was thirty years last June, but Shakespeare's woodnotes wild  
Lose something of their tune in any book but that.

My Kelmscott Chaucer, bound by Cobden-Sanderson,  
Sheds a pale glow around its regal rosewood shrine;  
And yet I'd rather part with all its splendid state  
Than tear from out my heart that Golden Treasury!

It was my noontide friend, you see, in schoolboy days,  
When I had made an end of the Franconia books;  
And if you chanced to see my pocket bulge still more,  
The podgy cause would be Poe's poems, and my lunch.

And now the room is dark, save for a little glow  
That shows a smouldering spark of life within the grate;  
Just light enough to tell that on Ruth's table, there,  
The book she loves so well, her pocket Browning, lies.

Yet very well I know, my thousand shelf-ranged friends,  
That I could quickly go to each one in the dark.  
You 've lived with me so much that if, when eyesight fails,  
I greet you by the touch you all will understand!

In the third, the ear catches both the internal- and the end-rhymes, and may or may not perceive the rhyming of the first syllables:

### NE PLUS ULTRA

Under the slope at the top of the hill,  
Wonder and hope and expectancy still;  
When on the height the whole view is revealed,  
Then is the sight but of woodland and field.

In the fourth, I have found the result the most doubtful of all, some intelligent listeners failing to catch any rhyme, while others

have perceived it here and there, but without system. The four illustrations perhaps sufficiently show why none of the arrangements has ever approved itself to the poets :

### THE FLOWER OF TIME

Primal chaos, ere the dawn of time,  
Knew the law of order pulsing through;  
Sun and star were severed, one by one,  
World and moon on spherul pathways hurled.

Heaven and earth divided, and the seven  
Days of God marched down the eternal ways;  
Here the ocean shrank away in fear,  
There the mountains climbed into the air.

When the grass and flowers were growing, then  
Bird and beast in wildwood cry were heard;  
Last of all, beneath the forest vast,  
Man and maid in sportful joyance ran.

So the years of life began to flow,  
Years of love and hate, of hopes and fears,  
All the human happenings that fall,  
Peace and war, and birth, and death's release.

Yet for one thing, one, earth waited, set  
Longingly to look with yearning strong, —  
Flower that bloomed in time's last radiant hour,  
You, all life's perfection, only you !

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